Un Nouveau Besoin:
Photography and Portraiture in Senegal (1860-1960)

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ABSTRACT

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Senegal's leading role in the development of African modernism in the 1960s is well known. Lesser-known is that, a century earlier, photography first arrived and took root in Senegal before circulating across French West Africa. This dissertation focuses on the genre of photographic portraiture in a country that did not have sculptural or masquerade traditions. It studies the ways in which photography accommodated and fostered new social and artistic practices and identities in Senegal between 1860—when the first studio opened in Saint Louis, the historical capital—and the 1960s, when photography became a "social imperative," to use Geoffrey Batchen's description (2001). The first chapter discusses *cartes-de-visite* commissioned as early as the 1860s by the first Senegalese patrons. In the course of this discussion, I challenge unilateral conceptions of photography as an apparatus of ideological control monopolized by the colonial authority. Chapter Two argues that Islam—the predominant religion in Senegal since the late nineteenth century—facilitated the popularity of the genre of portraiture through the circulation of devotional images in the form of lithographs, glass painting and photographs between the 1890s and 1920s. Chapter Three focuses on two photo series by amateur photographers from Saint Louis in the interwar period. I argue that these snapshots delineate the birth of a new subjectivity that neither mimicked French culture, nor conformed to Wolof customs. The last chapter juxtaposes the work of Mama Casset and Oumar Ka, two studio photographers working in the 1960s and 70s, in the capital and the rural interior of the country, respectively. In doing so I revisit the association between photography's modernity and urban living, and propose that

modernity can also be linked with “rural” tastes and styles. Rather than interpret it as either a “foreign” or “local” technology, this dissertation traces the fluctuations of photography’s significance in a dialectic relation with European, Islamic, American, African and Indian sources, revealing the nature of the medium as a multiplier of visions. Given Senegal's privileged status within *La Grande France,* this analysis will contribute to our understanding of the relationship between photography and modernity in Africa and beyond.

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DEDICATION

Alla nonna Nora

Introduction

Until the mid-nineteenth century, art in Senegal did not feature forms of portraiture. Unlike neighboring countries such as Mali, Senegal did not have a history of figuration in sculpture or masquerade—or what we would now identify as "traditional African art."[1] Despite this lack of a portraiture tradition, Senegal was one of the first countries in French West Africa where photography arrived and gained popularity, before proliferating across the region. While it is not clear why local populations had not previously engaged with this aesthetic genre, we do know that it was not due to an extreme case of iconoclasm or resistance to figuration itself.[2] Indeed, following the introduction of the first camera into the colony in the early 1840s, photographic portraiture was rapidly taken up and in a relatively short time span became one of Senegal's most popular and fertile media. In the 1910s for instance, a surprised Lieutenant-Governor of Senegal described the unprecedented circulation of images, which he interpreted as the emergence of a new need: "*un nouveau besoin*."[3]

This dissertation does not provide a linear and exhaustive history of photography in Senegal; rather, it explores the development of photographic portraiture as a genre that accommodated and fostered new social and artistic practices and identities in the country. This

[1] The Casamance, Senegal's southernmost region is probably the most famous exception to this case. While the rest of the country is predominantly Muslim and ethnically identifies as Wolof, Pulaar and Serer, the population in the Casamance is predominantly Diola and they practice indigenous religions and/or Christianity. Besides the masquerades in Casamance, Senegal does have performance traditions, which however do not employ sculptural masks. Ferdinand De Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity Power and Secrecy in Casamance, Senegal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

[2] While art historian Susan Kart argues that "the lack of masquerade tradition might be due to the introduction of Islam to the area in the 11th century" there is no real evidence that it was the case. Elizabeth Susan Kart, "From Direct Carving to Récupération: The Art of Moustapha Dimé in Post-Independence Senegal 1974-1997" (Thesis (Ph.D.), Columbia University, 2013), 37. Inter alia, art historian René Bravmann demonstrated that figurative traditions have persisted among well-established Muslim communities across West Africa. René A. Bravmann, *Islam and Tribal Art in West Africa*, African Studies Series (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 31.

[3] ANS 13G6 n. 721 January 1915

study will focus on four moments between the 1860s, when the first photographic studio opened in urban areas, and the 1960s, when the medium had spread across the country. In proceeding chronologically, these four case studies discuss how photography and portraiture in particular became so appealing in Senegal. By focusing on different formats, aesthetics, sitters, and practitioners, I seek to render the heterogeneity of these photographic practices and the variety of subjectivities that emerged through them.

Locating Senegal and its Modern Subjects

Located on the Atlantic Ocean (fig.0.1), Senegal has historically held a strategic position in West Africa. Already by the mid-fifteenth century the Portuguese had taken advantage of the Senegalese harbors off the Cap-Vert peninsula, namely Gorée and Dakar, as a departure point for their Atlantic trade. Politically, after it became part of the French colonial empire in the mid-nineteenth century, two of Senegal's cities, Saint Louis and then Dakar, served as capitals of *l'Afrique occidentale française* (AOF), a federation of eight colonial territories that spanned across West and Central Africa.[4] Given its privileged political status and geographic location, the latest technological advancements arrived first at the Senegalese harbors before circulating inland. That was the case of the first daguerreotypes that had reached the colony by the 1840s.

The arrival of photography in Senegal in the early 1840s coincided with a dramatic shift in the political and economic life of the colony. Until 1850, France had exercised its control over a few urban centers that functioned as commercial hubs or *comptoirs*; however, between 1854 and 1865 Senegal's Governor Louis Faidherbe led the drive to occupy the interior of the country. Under Faidherbe's energetic expansionism, Senegal's territory was consolidated, a new

[4] The federation included Mauritania, Senegal, French Soudan (now Mali), French Guinea, Ivory Coast, Dahomey (now Benin) and Niger. The federation existed from approximately 1895 to 1960. Saint Louis served as the capital of the AOF between 1895 and 1902, when Dakar replaced it until 1960.

agriculture-based economy launched, the Dakar-Saint Louis rail line was begun and new assimilation policies enacted. In brief, through Faidherbe's aggressive colonial expansion some of the most important forces associated with modernization—a term that I will define in the coming pages—were in full swing.

One of the most important measures enacted during Faidherbe's assimilation politics led to the establishment of the four communes. By the late nineteenth century, the four cities of Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque and Dakar were granted municipal status.[5] While in the case of Saint Louis, a mayor had been appointed by the Governor of Senegal in 1778 and its municipal privileges were consolidated a decade later during the French Revolution, the city became a "commune" only in 1872, at the same time of the city of Gorée. Rufisque and Dakar were placed on equal footing almost a decade later in 1880 and 1887 respectively.[6] These communes' status, whose limits and definition shifted across time, also meant that those who were born in these cities acquired French citizenship and eventually gained the power to send their elected

[5] The literature on the *Quatre Communes* is extensive. For further reference see: Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 2 (2001); H. O. Idowu, "The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880," ibid.9 (1968); John D. Hargreaves, "The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes,1900-1920 by G. Wesley Johnson," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1972); G. Wesley Johnson, *Naissance Du Sénégal Contemporain: Aux Origines De La Vie Politique Moderne (1900-1920)* (Paris: Karthala, 1991); David Robinson, "Ethnography and Customary Law in Senegal (Ethnographie Et Droit Coutumier Au Sénégal)," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 32, no. 126 (1992); Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "La Ville Coloniale: 'Lieu De Colonisation' Et Métissage Culturel," *Afrique contemporaine* 4 (1993); Mamadou Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," *Development and Change* 29, no. 4 (1998); Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial."; Mamadou Diouf, "Les 'Évolués' Et La Change Dans L'afrique Occidentale Française Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914-1956 by James E. Genova," ibid.47, no. 1 (2006); David Robinson, "The Murids: Surveillance and Collaboration," *The journal of African history* 40, no. 2 (1999): 201. On the imposition of voting rights and demands for tribunals see Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 131-7.

[6] Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," 674.

representatives to the French National Assembly.[7] This category of individuals, called the *originaires*, included a varied group of citizens, namely: Black Muslims, Black Catholics, *métis* (with a mixed Senegalese and European ancestry), *signares* (black and *métisse* women married to or descendants of Europeans) and (depending on the period) freed slaves. According to the historian Wesley Johnson, the political privileges of the *originaires* were more substantial than those of Creoles in British colonies, and yet, as the majority had remained Muslim, they were less European in culture.[8]

If photography generally flourished at first through the patronage of the most empowered social classes, in Senegal the early history of this medium is closely tied to that of the *originaires,* who constituted some of its earliest clients and enthusiastically embraced the technology. As we will see throughout the chapters, photography became the tool that crystallized the privileges of this group, beginning with the first photo I.D.s signifying their exceptional legal status. Through photography, the urban dwellers of the four communes and Saint Louis in particular shaped their social identity, differentiating themselves from the French living in France and from the African subjects living in the interior of the country. By the late 1950s, as photography became available across the country, those living in more rural areas finally had access to its technology, which they used to articulate their own interpretation of modernity.

The tensions between colonizers and colonized, *originaires* and *sujets*, urban and rural dwellers that originated in the mid-nineteenth century persisted until the achievement of independence in 1960 with the election of the first Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor. The dialectic relation between these different social and cultural groups is one of the main threads of this dissertation. By addressing these competing identities and their diverging

[7] Ibid., 673.
[8] G. Wesley Johnson, "The Senegalese Urban Elite, 1900-1945," in *Africa & the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture* ed. Philip D. Curtin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972), 139.

photographic aesthetics, I will seek to make visible the contradictory impulses of African modernity.[9]

As a first approximation, in this dissertation I will use David Harvey's definition of modernity as the cultural experience of modernization.[10] In a similar vein, Anthony Giddens describes modernity as "modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onward," to then extend globally.[11] Nonetheless, the modern experience acquired different inflections as it reached different parts of the world. In the West, the experience of modernization is generally agreed to include phenomena such as urbanization, communications, industrialization, wage labor and factory systems. However, scholars such as Rasheed Araeen and Salah Hassan *inter alia* have encouraged us to challenge the idea of modernity as a "universalized European construct or monopoly," and to study the local significance of this global phenomenon.[12] The study of modernity on the African continent, for instance, should include factors such as slavery, colonialism and the struggle to decolonize.[13] In line with the expanding literature on 'global modernism,' Araeen and Hassan's contributions seek to "provincialize Europe," to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's words, and its monopoly over modernity.[14]

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[9] In this dissertation I will focus mostly on ideas of modernity, rather than modernism, which will be discussed briefly only in Chapter Four in relation to Leopold Senghor's articulations.

[10] On modernity: David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford England; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989), 205. On modernism: "Modernity and Modernism," in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, ed. David Harvey (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 23; "Modernization," in *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, ed. Byron Harvey (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 99.

[11] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 1st paperback ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1991), 1.

[12] Salah M. Hassan, "African Modernism: Beyond Alternative Modernities Discourse," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109, no. 3 (2010): 454; Rasheed Araeen, "Modernity, Modernism, and Africa's Place in the History of Art of Our Age," *Third Text* 19, no. 3 (2005); "Modernity, Modernism and Africa's Authentic Voice," *Third Text* 24, no. 2 (2010).

[13] Hassan, "African Modernism: Beyond Alternative Modernities Discourse," 459.

[14] Dipesh. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Building on Araeen and Hassan, my dissertation will take into consideration phenomena that may not have shaped the experience of modernization in the West, but determined what it meant to be modern in Senegal. For instance, in discussing the construction of modern subjectivities in Senegal, my dissertation considers the impact of Islam, as it became the predominant religion in the country in the late nineteenth century, precisely when photography too was becoming increasingly popular.[15] The four chapters of this dissertation narrate the emergence of these different subjectivities and presents photography as a medium that could both inspire and accommodate new identities that neither mimicked nor resembled the European bourgeois subject.

Rather than approaching photography as either a "local" or a "foreign" technology, I build on Ariella Azoulay's idea that photography is not "susceptible to monopolization."[16] Azoulay explains that the photograph escapes the authority of the photographer or "anyone's claim to sovereignty" because its significance is constantly negotiated among what she terms "the parties to the contract," namely the photographer, the photographed, camera, and the

[15] The association of photography with modernity is a recurrent trope in the history of art. A brief overview of publications and exhibition catalogues on the history of photography attest to this. Just to mention a few: Zeynep Çelik, Edhem Eldem, and Hande Eagle, *Camera Ottomana: Photography and Modernity in the Ottoman Empire, 1840-1914*, 1st edition. ed. (Istanbul: Koç University Press, 2015); Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); Karen Strassler, *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java*, Objects/Histories: Critical Perspectives on Art, Material Culture, and Representation (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010). Indeed, more powerfully than any other medium, photography has shaped the course of modernity, by profoundly influencing a variety of fields from science to entertainment, from law to art making. On photography and law see for instance: Jennifer L. Mnookin, "The Image of Truth: Photographic Evidence and the Power of Analogy," *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 10, no. 1 (1998). On photography and science see: Marta Braun and Etienne-Jules Marey, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). On the impact of photography in art history: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media," in *Selected Writings, 1935-1938*, ed. Walter Benjamin, et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008). On photography and entertainment see for instance: Simone Natale, "A Short History of Superimposition: From Spirit Photography to Early Cinema," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 10, no. 2 (2012).

[16] Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books; Distributed by The MIT Press, 2008), 113.

spectator.[17] If this dynamic is endogenous to the photograph, then as researchers we have the responsibility to document and narrate these negotiations. In tracing the fluctuations of photography's significance in a dialectic relation with European, Islamic, American and African sources, I argue that photography functions as a multiplier of visions. If Azoulay argues that the medium engenders a decentralization of the gaze, as the meaning of the photograph is constantly negotiated and never final, I suggest that photography is as multiplier of visions, as it can accommodate and foster new social and artistic practices and identities—such as it did in Senegal. Photography is not universal because it means one thing to everyone, but because it can mean different things to different people. This proliferation of meanings that photography can trigger underscores the significance of photography's success in Senegal.

Mapping the Field: Between universal aspirations and local articulations

In the past three decades, art historians and anthropologists have produced, in a relatively short time, localized histories of photography spanning from Asia to Australia, from Latin America to Africa. Photo historian Geoffrey Batchen argues that the appearance of these publications suggests that the field "is in the process of being transformed beyond recognition."[18] In a similar vein, MoMA Photography Chief Curator Quentin Bajac has argued that one of the most crucial tests for specialists in the field in the future will be globalism.[19] If Beaumont Newhall wrote "*The* history of photography" in 1949, few photo historians would now dare to

[17] Ibid., 112.
[18] Geoffrey Batchen, "Review: Photography and Egypt/Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java," *The Art Bulletin* 93, no. 4 (2011): 497. In another passage he explains: "aside from the interest of their own local idiosyncrasies and achievements … [regional histories] represent … a further small displacement in the certainty of that monolithic, singular history of "world" photography with which we are all so tediously familiar." *Each Wild Idea : Writing, Photography, History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 30.
[19] Quentin Bajac, "A Blizzard of Photographs," in *Lectures in Photography* (Columbia College, Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Photography, 2014).

compose a linear and supposedly comprehensive history of a global medium.[20] Any photo historian, or for that matter any *art* historian, has to come to terms with the multiplicity of narratives outside of Europe and the US. Moreover, while Bajac seems concerned with the inclusion of photo histories outside the West, for Batchen the issue is not that of adding content to our "global archive." Batchen has a more ambitious question: what can these histories tell us about photography as a medium?

More than any other medium, photography has shaped the course of modernity.[21] The emerging literature on histories outside the West has made evident that, *differently* from any other medium, photography was appropriated across the world almost simultaneously. Only a few years after François Arago officially announced the "invention" of photography at the French Chamber of Deputies in 1839, the first daguerreotypes had already arrived in Egypt.[22] The coevality of the development of photography at the epicenter of modernity—say, France—and at the peripheries of the empire—say Africa—raises important questions about the nature of this medium and its relation to time and modernity. Does the medium impose its own assumptions on the people who use it, or do people shape what photography is?[23] This question traverses all of these local histories mentioned by Batchen. Every scholar writing on photography outside the West has to contend with it. And yet, this question is not new in the field of

[20] Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*, Completely rev. and enl. ed. (New York, Boston: Museum of Modern Art, 1982). Since Newhall, the tendency has been to differentiate and move away from linear histories. Nonetheless some scholars are still exploring the possibilities of writing a cohesive history of the medium. See for instance: Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy, or, the History of Photography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

[21] Photography's relation to modernity is evident in its impact on a variety of fields including art history, law, journalism, criminology, urban planning and entertainment. Walter Benjamin is one of the first scholars to account for the major change that photography, or mechanical reproduction, brought about. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media."

[22] Geoffrey Batchen, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 3. On the genesis of photography see also: Quentin Bajac, *The Invention of Photography: The First Fifty Years* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002).

[23] Anthropologist Tobias Wendl begins his article on photography in Ghana addressing this conundrum. Tobias Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 39 (2001): 79.

photography. In fact, it is one of the most contested issues in the historiography of the discipline, a question that has its roots in the genesis of photography.

When François Arago offered photography "generously to the entire world," the medium was presented as a promising universal language that could serve humanity, for example, by, in documenting, the world's heritage—whether in France or in Egypt.[24] This universalist discourse was maintained almost intact via photographers such as August Sander, who in 1931 delivered a radio talk entitled "Photography as a Universal Language."[25] In this talk, Sander presented photography as a global method of communication that could bypass the barriers of illiteracy and language. He declared, "Today with photography we can communicate our thoughts, conceptions and realities to all the people of earth […] Even the most isolated Bushman could understand a photograph of the heavens."[26] Sander's statement functions as an artist's manifesto, revealing a deep-rooted faith in the possibilities of the medium.

In 1955, MoMA curator Edward Steichen launched the exhibition *Family of Man,* further exploring the medium's universalist promise. The exhibition collected over five hundred photographs thematically organized around subjects such as love, children, and death, searching for the commonalities that bind people and cultures around the world. It did not matter where the sitters, the photographers or the viewers came from: the universality of the photographic language ensured its legibility. The exhibition had tremendous success, touring for eight years across six continents and attracting about nine million visitors.[27] However it also received pointed critiques. In 1957, Roland Barthes reviewed the show as it arrived in Paris, questioning

[24] Dominique François Arago, "Report," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, Conn: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 24.
[25] Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41, no. 1 (1981): 17.
[26] August Sander and Anne Halley, "From the Nature & Growth of Photography: Lecture 5: Photography as a Universal Language," *The Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (1978): 675.
[27] Celia Hartmann to MoMA: Inside/Out, 2010, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/11/17/edward-steichen-archive-the-55th-anniversary-of-the-family-of-man.

its universalist appeal. He argued that, in postulating a shared human essence, the exhibition suppressed "the determining weight of History."[28] According to Barthes, by annihilating human differences, the exhibition effaced injustices and therefore perpetrated a subtle form of violence against those who are oppressed.[29]

Photo historians such as John Tagg and Allan Sekula wrote extensively in the 1980s against the idea that photography functions as a "universal equivalent." They questioned a formalist reading of the image whose meaning is seen as independent from "larger discursive conditions."[30] In *The Burden of Representation,* Tagg contended that the medium as such "has no identity."[31] Photography is not a neutral tool; rather its identity is shaped by the context and conditions of its making, and therefore its meaning may vary. Needless to say, Tagg and Sekula played a major role in carving out a space where narratives *other* than the Western one could exist. They created the possibility for photography to mean different things, and for the photograph to reveal the conditions—especially power relations—that shaped its production and circulation. It therefore comes as little surprise that these scholars were popular among the pioneering scholars who first wrote on photography at the peripheries of the empires. Building on Tagg, anthropologist Christopher Pinney identified specific forces, whether part of the colonial experience or rooted in belief systems, that have shaped the significance of photography in India. This approach allowed him to discuss local notions and articulations of likeness and

[28] Roland Barthes, "The Great Family of Man," in *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 100.
[29] Barthes writes: "everything here, the content and appeal of the pictures, the discourse which justifies them, aims to suppress the determining weight of History: we are held back at the surface of an identity, prevented precisely by sentimentality from penetrating into this ulterior zone of human behavior where historical alienation introduces some 'differences' which we shall here quite call 'injustices.'" ibid. This is what elsewhere he calls the "violence of prejudices." Barthes quoted in Geoffrey Batchen, ed. *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009), 1.
[30] Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," 16.
[31] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 118.

identity that define the genre of portraiture in India and do not necessarily correspond to Western understandings.[32]

Until at least the 1990s, these two broadly defined views marked the extremes of the debate: on one side the formalist that privileged a universalist reading of the photograph based on the presumed existence of a medium's "essence"; on the other the postmodern, whereby all identity is defined by context.[33] Within this framework, African photography emerges as a unique case study where the clash between the universalist discourse and the culturalist approach is particularly contentious.

In the early 1990s, the first major international exhibitions that included studio photographers such as Seydou Keïta and Mama Casset catapulted African photography onto the international art market.[34] Susan Vogel's landmark exhibition *Africa Explores*, Revue Noire's Parisian *Revue Noire et les photographes africains* and Françoise Huguier's work on Malian

[32] Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); "Photographic Portraiture in Central India in the 1980s and 1990s," in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1997). It is important to notice that Pinney at times exposes the limits of Tagg's approaches. See: "What's Photography's Got to Do with It?," in *Photography's Orientalism: New Essays on Colonial Representation*, ed. Ali Behdad and Luke Gartlan (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013).

[33] In *Burning with Desire*, Batchen maps the field of the history of photography as a struggle between the formalist and the postmodernist approach and seeks to move beyond them. Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997), xiii, 20-1; Jae Emerling, *Photography: History and Theory* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 4-6. John Szarkowski, the head of the Department of Photography at MoMA from 1968 to 1991 defended photography's right to be in the museum by emphasizing photography's formal qualities as a continuation of the Western pictorial tradition. On this regard see: John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye* (New York, Boston: Museum of Modern Art, 1966). Sekula had described formalism as an approach that "collects all the world's images in a single aesthetic emporium, tearing them from all contingencies of origin, meaning and use." Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," 23.

[34] In the 1991 exhibition *Africa Explores* Vogel included photographic portraits that she had collected in 1975 in Mali by Seydou Keïta without including the name of the author. In the exhibition, she had also displayed at least another dozen photographs by other West African photographers. In 1992, Revue Noire curated the exhibition *Revue Noire et les photographes africains* at the Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles in Paris showcasing around ninety photographers. Meanwhile in 1991-2 the French photographer Françoise Huguier was conducting research on Malian photographers leading to the organization of the First Biennial of African Photography in Bamako in 1994. Interestingly, many of these projects developed in response to the 1989 exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* curated by Jean-Hubert Martin. On this exhibition see: Jean Hubert Martin et al., *Magiciens De La Terre* (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1989); Lucy Steeds et al., *Making Art Global (Part 2): Magiciens De La Terre, 1989*, Exhibition Histories (London: Afterall, 2013). In 1995, Kobena Mercer curated a photo exhibition in the United Kingdom, while André Magnin curated the first monographic exhibition on Malick Sidibé in Paris. Kobena Mercer, *Self Evident: Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 12th August-16th September* (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 1995).

photographers shattered preexisting conceptions of the uses and appropriations of photography in the continent.[35] Until then, the majority of the literature on photography in Africa was on Western photographers who arrived in the colonies and documented Europe's 'civilizing mission.'[36] Moreover, the sheer majority of images from Africa were of colonial matrix. Often printed in scientific publications or circulated as postcards, they were sometimes used by art historians to contextualize the production and consumption of traditional African art, while at other times, they were used to denounce the atrocities of the colonial enterprise.[37] Until the 1990s, images—particularly those circulating during the colonial time—were assumed to have been produced almost exclusively by Western photographers, addressing a foreign audience and in support of the agenda of the colonial powers: Africans appeared as victims, the colonial powers as perpetrators, and the camera as a tool of surveillance.[38]

The Malian photographers were appealing to the Western eye: Sidibé's exuberant shots and Keïta's sharp portraits surprised and intrigued the unfamiliar spectator. In contrast with the

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[35] Susan Mullin Vogel and Center for African Art (New York N.Y.), *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art* (New York, Munich: Center for African Art; Prestel-Verlag, 1991); Jean-Loup Amselle, *L'art De La Friche: Essai Sur L'art Africain Contemporain* (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), 150-1; 74-5; 97.

[36] An example is offered by Killingray, who offers an overview of photography in Africa, ignoring the presence of African photographers working before independence David Killingray and Andrew Roberts, "An Outline History of Photography in Africa to Ca. 1940," *History in Africa* 16 (1989). Within this general tendency scholars such as Vera Viditz-Ward working on early photography in Sierra Leone, and Stephen Sprague on later appropriations of photography among the Yoruba, carved out alternative routes to approaching photography within the continent. Stephen Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," *African Arts* 12, no. 1 (1978); Vera Viditz-Ward, "Photography in Sierra Leone, 1850-1918," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 57, no. 4 (1987).

[37] Schneider is one of the first scholars to attempt to reconstruct the historiography of the field of African photography. Jürg Schneider, "The Topography of the Early History of African Photography," *History of Photography* 34, no. 2 (2010). In the early 1990s, scholars such as Papstein were considering using photographs as historical evidence Robert Papstein, "Creating and Using Photographs as Historical Evidence," *History in Africa* 17 (1990); Carolyn Adenaike Keyes, "Contextualizing and Decontextualizing African Historical Photographs," ibid.23 (1996); Christaud M. Geary, "Photographs as Materials for African History Some Methodological Considerations," ibid.13 (1986). Within this reading, photography's evidentiary function is privileged to other approaches that may question its relation to reality and power.

[38] Christopher A. Morton and Elizabeth Edwards, eds., *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009); Liam Mark Buckley, "Studio Photography and the Aesthetics of Postcolonialism in the Gambia, West Africa" (Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Virginia, 2003), 19; Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 83.

images produced by the colonizers, the Malian portraitists celebrated the freedom of Bamako's youth and the sophistication of its upper class. Before the first exhibitions of the early 1990s, specialists, as well as a wider art audience had given little consideration to the notion that photography could have been a popular medium among the general African population, nor that local photographers could have developed such a distinctive and spectacular photographic language.[39] In a relatively short timespan, photographers such as Keïta and Casset gained international recognition and substantial currency in the art market in a way that has hardly been replicated by other non-Western photographers.[40]

The display of these portraits—now printed large-scale for gallery walls—transformed the original viewing experience of the images, adapting it to Western notions of authorship and the object's autonomy.[41] The championing of the figure of the photographer and his *oeuvre* re-contextualized African photography within a universalist discourse: Keïta's photographic language becomes self-explanatory, and independent from larger discursive conditions.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as the larger field of African art was expanding with a growing interest in modern and contemporary art from the continent, the photographers of the independence era were re-framed within the context of decolonization. Particularly through the curatorial work of specialists such as Okwi Enwezor, the figure of the photographer was

[39] In the case of Senegal, despite modern and contemporary art having received a lot of attention since the 1966 *Festival mondial des arts nègres*, photography as a medium had not interested collectors and gallerists until the 1990s. When, for instance, I interviewed the French photographer Michel Renaudeau, who had lived in Senegal since the 1960s and was collecting local glass painters and knew all the practicing photographers, he said that at the time he didn't realize their value and never collected them (Michel Renaudeau, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2011). In the 1990s, the interest in African photography increased exponentially, with publications such as *Revue Noire* at the frontline of raising awareness in this new field, as well as exhibitions on African photography in Senegal and Mali.

[40] Z.S. Strother and Barry Flood, personal communication, New York, 2014.

[41] On the issue of the display and market of African photography see: Geoffrey Batchen, "Does Size Matter?," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift/ Journal of Art History* 72, no. 4 (2003); Candace M. Keller, "Framed and Hidden Histories: West African Photography from Local to Global Contexts," *African Arts* 47, no. 4 (2014); Jean-Loup Amselle, Noal Mellott, and Julie Van Dam, "Primitivism and Postcolonialism in the Arts," *MLN* 118, no. 4 (2003); Amselle, *L'art De La Friche: Essai Sur L'art Africain Contemporain*.

described as the liberator of the "gaze" as African countries transitioned from the colonial to postcolonial era in the 1960s.[42] The achievement of independence—the epitome of political maturity—is collapsed with the coming of age of the country's photographic language: freed from colonial subjugation photographers, like citizens, are liberated and the authenticity of their "gaze" restored.[43] In studying studio practices of the independence era, scholars celebrated the emergence of a truly original photographic practice. This was valid for Seydou Keïta in Mali, as well as for Mama Casset in Senegal. They were quickly labeled the fathers of African photography and scholars celebrated "the Africanization of photography."[44]

Between the extremes of the subjugated versus the liberated "gaze" lies the whole history of photography in Africa: a history that is visually rich and culturally complex.

Myths of African photography undone

Between the mid-80s and the mid-90s, at least two major Africanist art historians, Suzanne Blier and Sidney Kasfir, had written articles on the subject of what they termed "enduring myths" or "fictions" that had shaped the field as well as popular perceptions of objects originating on the continent.[45] Some of these included the questions of authenticity, change, and

[42] Okwui Enwezor, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994* (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2001); Clare Bell and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum., *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, May 24-September 29, 1996* (New York, N.Y.: Guggenheim Museum, 1996).

[43] In this dissertation, I argue against the principle of the "Africanization of photography" or what Wendl describes as "the emergence of a truly original photographic practices and imagery," a phenomenon that coincided with the decolonization period. Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," 81. Other scholars working on photography in Africa or elsewhere have employed a similar approach Buckley, "Studio Photography and the Aesthetics of Postcolonialism in the Gambia, West Africa," 4; Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, 72.

[44] Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," 81.

[45] While Kasfir and Blier framed their articles as an effort to unveil these "invisible" paradigms, other scholars have challenged similar models while using other analytical framing. Here I am thinking, for instance, of Strother as she challenges the stereotype of anonymity associated with the African artist who creates masks; she bypasses such preconceptions by studying the interaction between sculptors and dancers in the creation of new masquerades among the Pende. Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, "African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow," *African Arts* 25, no. 2

time. Following Thomas Kuhn, Kasfir explains that the historiography of art "is dominated by certain paradigms which serve as exemplars or models of puzzle-solutions."[46] Although they tend to transform over time "they are so powerful that they function as unquestioned assumptions when in force."[47] The importance of identifying and studying them arises from their initial invisibility: in literature, they are not rendered explicitly but rather accepted as assumptions. Blier and Kasfir's contribution is thus invaluable in mapping and anticipating the traps into which we, as researchers and specialists alike, can easily fall without realizing it. In the following section I will offer a brief review of the literature on West African photography. In approaching these disparate examples, I will employ Kasfir's and Blier's *modus operandi*, paying particular attention to some of the myths that scholars *did* manage to refute in relation to photography in Africa. I will then articulate how each point relates to this dissertation.

I. Medium Purity

The genesis of photography presented it as an innovation that drastically differed from any of the preceding technology.[48] This attempt to differentiate photography from, for instance, painting or printmaking is one that accompanied the medium through history as it struggled to be accepted as one of the high arts. Recently scholars such as Geoffrey Batchen, Eduardo Cadava and Stephen Bann have sought to move beyond the boundaries of criticism that attempts only to preserve the medium's purity.[49] These scholars achieved this either by focusing on the

(1992); "One Tribe, One Style? Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art," *History in Africa* 11 (1984); Suzanne Preston Blier, "Enduring Myths of African Art," in *Africa: The Art of a Continent* (New York: Guggenheim, 1995); Z. S. Strother, *Inventing Masks: Agency and History in the Art of the Central Pende* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[46] Kasfir, "One Tribe, One Style? Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art," 163.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Arago, "Report."

[49] Geoffrey Batchen, "Double Displacement: Photography and Dissemination," in *The Itinerant Languages of Photography Symposium*, ed. Eduardo Cadava (Princeton University Art Museum2013); to Still Searching, 2012,

interaction between different media, or on the itinerancy of photography as images migrate from one support to another. Scholars writing specifically on African photography have also contributed to challenging the myth of photography's purity.

In 1978 Stephen Sprague, a practicing photographer, published one of the first articles on African photography following his fieldwork in Nigeria.[50] In this work Sprague reviews portraits produced by Yoruba photographers within an indeterminate temporal space, through which—he argues—it is possible to identify a distinctive visual language. According to Sprague, the Yoruba, who have a strong tradition of figurative art "have aesthetic values and a need of representation that could be satisfied and understood in a photograph."[51] In contrasting Yoruba with Hausa visual traditions, Sprague concludes that the former are more inclined to use the medium and successfully managed to incorporate photography into their daily lives. Accordingly, Sprague was able to isolate Yoruba principles in the aesthetic and functions of photography.[52]

Sprague unfortunately never expanded this research. Nevertheless, his 1978 article has had a huge impact on the field of African photography studies. Sprague's encouragement to research the dynamics of re-appropriation and the relation between local visual practices and photography was taken up by numerous scholars. Olu Oguibe, Christine Pinther and Till Förster,

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http://blog.fotomuseum.ch/2012/09/2-form-is-henceforth-divorced-from-matter/; Stephen Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2001); Eduardo Cadava et al., *The Itinerant Languages of Photography* (Princeton, New Jersey; New Haven, CT: Princeton University Art Museum; Yale University Press, 2013).

[50] Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves."

[51] Ibid., 59.

[52] While Sprague's line of argument provides agency to the photographers—who are now presented as original creators rather than passive copiers of Western aesthetics—the article retains some of Sidney Kasfir's repeated myths. In presenting "Yoruba photography as a genuine expression of the culture," Sprague does not reveal diachronic and synchronic changes that complicate notions of authenticity. While cultural specificities cannot be denied or overlooked, Kasfir suggested that this interpretative model confined artists within an a-temporal space, where innovations as well as hybridity could not be acknowledged. Kasfir, "One Tribe, One Style? Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art."; "African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow."; "One Tribe, One Style? Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art," 187; Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," 56.

inter alia, developed this question further, tracing the continuities and disruptions between photography and popular media such as sculpture and textiles.[53] These scholars demonstrated that in order to understand the specific significance of photography in Africa, it is essential to bypass readings that situate photographic production in a vacuum. Photography in Africa did not emerge in a void, but overlapped and competed with rooted cultural practices.

In studying this process of intermediality, we are also able to address the changing significance of specific genres such as portraiture, which, by extension, involves understandings of likeness, mimesis and individuality.[54] In fact, if photographs replace sculptures in specific cultural practices as discussed by Oguibe, this relation can provide important clues as to how portraiture is understood, and what features are valued in a photograph in a local context.[55] In Chapter Two, I will discuss what this may mean for Senegal, a country that did not foster forms of portraiture before the advent of photography.

II. The history of a nation

The early history of photography is closely intertwined with the trajectory of nation building as different countries such as England and France competed over their primacy in the development of this technology and the creation of a photographic language that mirrored their

[53] Pinther discussed the significance of photography in relation to textile production and consumption; Förster the intermediality of portraiture in Northern Ivory Coast; Oguibe the relation between *Ibeji,* or twin sculptures and photographic portraits often using double exposure. Olu Oguibe, "Photography and the Substance of the Image," in *The Culture Game*, ed. Olu Oguibe (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesora Press, 2004), 85; Kerstin Pinther, "Textiles and Photography in West Africa," *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture* 1, no. 1 (2007).

[54] This interest in intermediality is shared among many scholars writing on non-Western histories of photography. By studying the relation between painting and photography in China, Gu Yi is able to demonstrate the specificity of notions of mimesis and personhood that differ from Western ones. The issue of indexicality and mimesis are further developed in Chapters Two and Four. Yi Gu, "What's in a Name? Photography and the Reinvention of Visual Truth in China, 1840-1911," *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 1 (2013).

[55] Oguibe, "Photography and the Substance of the Image."

national identities.[56] It is then not surprising that in reviewing the latest contributions to the histories of photography, and particularly those outside the West, it becomes apparent that the majority of these publications are organized around national axes: this is the case for India, Java, China, Japan and others.[57] Batchen interprets this tendency as a form of resistance to the "threat of global homogenization."[58] Alternatively, the popularity of this approach may have been triggered by the perception that a nation without a history of photography could not be called "modern." Yet, Batchen concludes, the most successful are those that are able to pose "both nation and photography as questions rather than givens," or in other words, those that can lift the veil on the myths surrounding these categories.[59]

In 2005, Erika Nimis published her doctoral thesis tracing the origins and development of Yoruba photographic practices across West Africa.[60] Nimis does not focus on one specific nation state, but instead introduces a new way of framing and understanding the photograph. By examining the Yoruba experience, she is on the one hand able to account for the transnational dimension of artistic practices, whose development is never confined to the borders of a nation

[56] On critiques of nationalism and national identity, see the canonical text: Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). Batchen studies the competition between different scientists and governments in establishing their primacy in "inventing photography." The competition between France and England was one of the strongest. Batchen, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History*, 3-6. On this issue see also: Bajac, *The Invention of Photography: The First Fifty Years*, 13-8; 22-6; 33-8; Anne McCauley, "François Arago and the Politics of the French Invention of Photography," in *Multiple Views. Logan Grant Essays on Photography, 1983-89*, ed. Daniel P. Younger (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 43-69. The employment of a technology for the creation of a national identity was also current with cinema, see for instance: Ed Buscombe, "The Idea of National Cinema," *Australian Journal of Screen Theory* 9/10 (1981).

[57] Just to mention a few examples: Strassler, *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java*; Anne Tucker et al., *The History of Japanese Photography* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2003); Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India*, Panizzi Lectures (London: The British Library, 2008); Terry Bennett, Anthony Payne, and Lindsey Stewart, *History of Photography in China 1842-1860* (London: Quaritch, 2009).

[58] Batchen, "Review: Photography and Egypt/Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java," 497. For another overview of national histories of photography also see: Joel Smith, "Review: The History of Japanese Photography," *CAA Online Reviews* September (2003).

[59] Batchen, "Review: Photography and Egypt/Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java," 501.

[60] Erika Nimis, *Photographes D'afrique De L'ouest: L'expérience Yoruba*, Hommes Et Sociétés; Variation: Hommes Et Sociétés (Paris, Ibadan: Karthala, 2005).

state. On the other hand, by using an ethnic rather than national axis, Nimis values the significance of the former in the construction of local identities, aesthetic tastes and artistic practices. Nimis's publication offers a linear history of the profession—from the 1930s[61] to the present—accounting for the incredible success of transnational photographic practices. Her approach suggests that, in the African context, the national discourse may not necessarily be the most effective method of accounting for the ways a photograph is produced and consumed. In this sense, Nimis's project is an example of those that can change the field's "ambitions, methods of analysis, narrative structures and objects of interest."[62] Nimis's transnational approach is radical in that it documents the complex routes via which photographers developed their practices.

While in my dissertation I chose to focus on a country—Senegal—rather than an ethnic group, I am not arguing for a "Senegaleseness" of Senegalese photography, nor for the parallel development of photography and a national identity.[63] Scholars such as Jennifer Bajorek and Liam Buckley have studied the impact of photography in the process of nation building in Senegal and Gambia in the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial era.[64] In my dissertation I instead chose to foreground the study of the establishment of portraiture in Senegal. The national or ethnic axes were not productive in my case, as I sought to render the multiplicity

[61] Nimis argues that only in the 1930s did people start to identify themselves as Yoruba. Ibid., 8.
[62] Batchen, "Review: Photography and Egypt/Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java," 497.
[63] In the case of Senegal, historians such as Johnson Wesley have argued that, unlike other African countries, the process of democratization in Senegal has its roots in the 1900s when the political system was no longer dominated by French or *métis* politicians. Johnson, *Naissance Du Sénégal Contemporain: Aux Origines De La Vie Politique Moderne (1900-1920)*, 9.
[64] Jennifer Bajorek, "'Ça Bousculait!' Democratization and Photography in Senegal," in *Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives*, ed. Richard Vokes (Woodbridge, Suffolk; New York: James Currey, 2012); Buckley, "Studio Photography and the Aesthetics of Postcolonialism in the Gambia, West Africa."; Liam E. Buckley, "Objects of Love and Decay: Colonial Photographs in a Postcolonial Archive," *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (2005).

of photographic practices, most of which were in dialogue with sources and influences *outside* of Senegal.[65]

As we will see in Chapter One, in Senegal the earliest photographers were not Senegalese but foreigners—that is European, Chinese, African and African American. The earliest documented Senegalese photographers, Meïssa Gueye and Mama Casset, started practicing photography only in the 1920s; and yet, as we will see later, the local elite had been commissioning and buying photographs since at least the 1860s. In my dissertation, I make a point to include these figures, because even if they were not Senegalese, they still served local patrons who commissioned and fashioned their own portraits. Scholars have often been resistant to consider early non-Western photography as "authentic." More commonly, nineteenth century *cartes-de-visite* or postcards are interpreted as mimicking Western codes, or as a function of colonial surveillance and typification. Scholars such as Ariella Azoulay, but also Elizabeth Edwards and Deborah Poole, have been instrumental in bypassing this myopic view, which does not acknowledge the agency of the sitters or the complexity of their "image world"—a term that Poole has coined.[66]

Like Nimis, I seek to resist a linear narrative whereby the achievement of independence is paralleled with the establishment of an authentic photographic language. Building on her work, I seek to render the variety of identities active in global circuits that shaped the significance of portraiture in Senegal by accounting for both the production and consumption of images in Senegal.

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[65] Although the Wolof comprise more than the 40% of the population, the state of Senegal includes at least five other ethnic groups (Fulani, Serer, Jola, Mandinka and Soninke) and other small foreign communities (Lebanese, Syrians and French).

[66] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*; Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*; Morton and Edwards, *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame*.

III. Photography as a foreign language

Before the development of a literature on non-Western photography, photography was largely portrayed as a medium invented by European genius and exported around the globe as a foreign technology. Since the 1990s, scholars such as Christopher Pinney have challenged this idea by focusing the critical debate away from its Euro-American center of gravity in an effort to "provincialize Europe," to use the words of the Indian anthropologist Dipesh Chakrabarty.[67] Scholars in African photography have significantly contributed to debunking the European exceptionalist myth.

In her doctoral dissertation on the history of Malian photography from the 1920s to the present day, Candace Keller tests the viability of "indigenous vocabularies" by approaching photographic practice from "local perspectives."[68] Keller's methodological stance is exemplary for its attempt to bypass Western ethnocentric epistemological dominance. Rather than applying the conceptual frames that emerged in the history of Western photography, Keller considers "Malian portrait photography in terms of the principal concepts of Mande theories of social action, known as *fadenya* and *badenya.*"[69]

To a large extent, Keller's approach can be understood as a critique of the earlier interpretations of the Malian photographers and their work. As mentioned earlier, the first displays of these portraits in the early 1990s in art galleries transformed the viewing experience, adapting it to Western notions of authorship and the object's autonomy. Keller questions the apparent legibility of the works. Following her extensive fieldwork, she shows that what may

[67] Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, eds., *Photography's Other Histories*, Objects/Histories (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2003), 12; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*.
[68] Candace M. Keller, "Visual Griots: Social, Political, and Cultural Histories in Mali through the Photographer's Lens" (Thesis (Ph.D.), Indiana University, 2008), 1.
[69] Ibid., 12; 330; 70.

appear legible in one context, elsewhere has a different meaning. To borrow Batchen's words: "the task, again, is to persuade readers from the metropolis that photographs that look the same to them—that appear to be mere copies of genres already familiar in the West—may perhaps mean different things, *might actually be different objects,* in other places."[70] To this point, Keller provides extensive documentation of how the photographic experience in Mali is shaped and articulated through ideas and concepts that are culturally specific.[71] Similarly to Nimis, Keller privileges a culturalist approach to photography, one that enriches our understanding of how the medium can function.

Building on this work, in undertaking research for my dissertation I sought to spend an extended time in Senegal conducting interviews with different consumers and producers of photography in order to gain familiarity with the local articulations and understanding of the medium. However, differently from Keller, I sought to account not only for endogenous forces, but also external ones that may have shaped the photographic experience. As pointed out by Manthia Diawara, the work of Malick Sidibé can hardly be understood without considering the influences of African-American culture, music and art.[72] The growing accessibility of popular material culture across the Atlantic consolidated a Pan-African identity, favoring the circulation of cultural trademarks across national borders, particularly at the climax of the Malian (socialist) nationalist project. Building on Diawara's approach, in Chapter Four I situate studio practices in relation to the emerging mass media culture that was flourishing in Africa.

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[70] Batchen, "Review: Photography and Egypt/Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java," 498.

[71] While Keller maintains that *her* history does not presume the existence of a singular "Malian" photography, her argument relies heavily on terms derived from a single local language, the Mande, which she argues has a currency across ethnic boundaries. Keller, "Visual Griots: Social, Political, and Cultural Histories in Mali through the Photographer's Lens," 13; 209.

[72] Manthia Diawara, "The 1960s in Bamako: Malick Sidibé and James Brown," in *Malick Sidibé: Photographs* (Gottingen: Steidl, 2003); "Talk of the Town," *Artforum* 36, no. February (1998).

IV. Photography as a tool of surveillance

As discussed at the beginning of the introduction, particularly in non-Western narratives, photography has often been understood as a tool of surveillance. Photography's emergence during colonial expansions has led to scholars' describing the role of the medium as a "fertilizer of the colonial vision."[73] While this approach is essential in rendering and condemning the violence of the colonial experience, it also limits our understanding of local dynamics and power relations.

Vera Viditz-Ward is one of the pioneers who studied the genesis of photography in West Africa. Following extensive archival research in Sierra Leone, Viditz-Ward identified the first mixed race photographers working in the capital in the nineteenth century. Building on her work, other scholars have studied early histories of photography, reassessing the status of the photographer, sitter and photographic object. Contrary to common belief, scholars found that local photographers, black and *métis*, were working as early as the 1850s in Sub-Sahara Africa.[74] While Viditz-Ward focused on black and mixed race photographers such as the Lisk-Carew brothers working in the 1870s in Sierra Leone, since the early 2000s scholars have uncovered the work of other African photographers working between the 1870s and 1910s. To name a few: Erin Haney traced the work of the Lutterodt family in Ghana; Jürg Schneider the Gambian John Parkes Decker and Sierra Leonean Francis Joaque; Lisa Anderson the work of J.A. Green in Nigeria and, more recently, Amy Staples the work of Nigerian Solomon Osagie Alonge.[75]

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[73] Alloula quoted in: Pinney and Peterson, *Photography's Other Histories*, 3.

[74] An example is the African American photographer Augustus Washington who moved to Liberia in 1852. Erin Haney, "Lutterodt Family Studios and the Changing Face of Early Portrait Photographs from the Gold Coast " in *Portraiture and Photography in Africa*, ed. John Peffer and Elisabeth Lynn Cameron (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 79; Christaud M. Geary, "The Past in the Present: Photographic Portraiture and the Evocation of Multiple Histories in the Bamum Kingdom of Cameroon," ibid., 79-80.

[75] Erin Haney, "If These Walls Could Talk; Exploring the Dynamic Archive through Ghanaian Portraiture," *Getting Pictures Right: context and interpretation* (2004); "Lutterodt Family Studios and the Changing Face of Early Portrait Photographs from the Gold Coast "; Vera Viditz-Ward, "Alphonso Lisk-Carew : Creole Photographer,"

Contrary to earlier accounts that did not contemplate the authorship of African photographers and tended to present photography as a monopoly of the colonial power, these recent contributions sketch a much more complex landscape that includes early African photographers who produced photos and edited postcards tailored to African as well as European customers, shattering overarching assumptions characterized by a polarization between European or African uses and appropriations of photography.

Similar to their European counterparts, African photographers worked for both a local and international audience. They were to a great extent itinerant, and therefore inserted within a larger global economy; or rather, the "Atlantic visualscape," to use Schneider's terms.[76] Christaud Geary, however, maintains that "we have yet to fully fathom the involvement of African pioneer photographers in imag[in]ing Africa during this time period."[77] If the impact of their production is yet to be assessed, particularly when they too produced ethnographic material for European consumption, to what extent are these photographers "visual intermediaries" as Geary terms them, or committed creators of new visual languages?[78]

In line with scholars such as Geary and Schneider, this dissertation aims to foreground Africans' authorship in producing and commissioning portraiture. Rather than solely focusing on the photographer's authorship, this study approaches local practices as a process that involved photographers, sitters and viewers, all of whom can be considered to have authored the image in

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African Arts 19, no. 1 (1985); "Photography in Sierra Leone, 1850-1918."; Amy Staples, "Chef S. O. Alonge: Photographer to the Royal Court of Benin, Nigeria," *Tribal art: quarterly journal of the art, culture and history of traditional peoples and New World civilizations* 73, no. 4 (2014); Martha G. Anderson and Lisa L. Aronson, "Jonathan A. Green: An African Photographer Hiding in Plain Sight," *African Arts* (2011); Schneider, "The Topography of the Early History of African Photography."; "Demand and Supply: Francis W. Joaque, an Early African Photographer in an Emerging Market," *Visual Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (2014).

[76] "Demand and Supply: Francis W. Joaque, an Early African Photographer in an Emerging Market."; "The Topography of the Early History of African Photography."

[77] Geary, "The Past in the Present: Photographic Portraiture and the Evocation of Multiple Histories in the Bamum Kingdom of Cameroon," 79.

[78] Ibid.

some way. This dissertation is close in spirit to those which have attempted to articulate practices of appropriation, circulation and displacement. By understanding identity not as a boundary, but rather "as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging the subject," to use Barry Flood's words, then we are able to see the photograph as one of these "objects of translation," which is born from these dialogs and interactions, and whose significance is constantly shifting.[79]

Review of the literature: A Senegalese Photography?

The history of photography in Senegal cannot be written without considering the key role played by Revue Noire. Founded in 1991 by Jean Loup Pivin, Simon Njami, Pascal Martin Saint Léon, and Bruno Tilliette in Paris, Revue Noire is a specialist publisher of books relating to African contemporary arts and cultures.[80] Between 1991 and 2011, Éditions Revue Noire published the printed quarterly magazine *Revue Noire*, two anthologies, and numerous artists' monographs. In 1998, it compiled the first and most extensive anthology on the history of photography on the African continent.[81]

Revue Noire is also far more than just a publishing house: it has played a leading role in the research, collection and exhibition of African photography.[82] When the editors embarked on

[79] Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.
[80] Well before it was founded Pivin, Njami, and Léon had worked in the cultural sector in France and in Africa. When they created Revue Noire they had already engaged with the contemporary artistic production of the continent and, even later Revue Noire remained a side project for many of its founders. In 1986 for instance, Pivin created an office to develop his activities as an architect for cultural and touristic projects.
[81] Pascal Martin Saint Léon, Jean Loup Pivin, and N'Goné Fall, *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography*, 1st English ed. (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999).
[82] Pivin describes Revue Noire with these words: "*Polyphonie de l'histoire, la petite et la grande histoire de Revue Noire. Anecdotique, théorique, cette histoire raconte une aventure humaine qui s'est risquée à être libre de beaucoup de préjugés. Et c'est probablement sa principale qualité, sans réelle autre prétention*." Jean Loup Pivin, Simon Njami, and Pascal Martin Saint Léon, 2010, http://www.revuenoire.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=94&Itemid=13&lang=fr.

the mission of compiling an anthology on African photography, very little information was available. In order to compose their 432-page book, they contacted the most engaging researchers, writers and scholars in Europe and in Africa to conduct research on the ground level. The profile of their authors is as varied as it is exceptional. It includes novelists such as the Senegalese Aminata Sow Fall, journalists such as the French Frédérique Chapuis; scholars such as Tobias Wendl, and photographers themselves, such as the South African Santu Mofokeng.[83] The anthology did not seek to emulate a scholarly publication: it did not employ a linear narrative, nor did it attempt to be exhaustive; rather, it sought to multiply its authorial voices to offer a "*polyphonie de l'histoire*."[84] In identifying hundreds of photographers, providing their biographical details and making available samples of their work, Revue Noire assembled an extensive visual archive. Researchers and specialists can now refer to this anthology as they begin their work and build on its content.

When they started conducting research on the continent's artistic practices, Pivin recalls a general resistance on the part of European experts in considering the continent as a major producer and consumer of art or photography. Despite this resistance, after years of research across the continent Revue Noire collected the works of about six hundred photographers. They discovered that, unlike painting, photography was an extremely popular medium.[85] In an interview, Pivin explained to me that the importance of studying photography on the continent rested in the fact that "the clients were Africans."[86] Photographs were made by and sold to Africans. This dynamic, which did not depend on foreign demand or intervention, created a local market that engendered new popular imaginings.

[83] Saint Léon, Pivin, and Fall, *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography*.
[84] Pivin, Njami, and Saint Léon Title of Weblog.
[85] Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication, Paris, France, August 2013.
[86] Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication, Paris, France, July 2011.

Within Revue Noire's promotion of photography across the continent, the work of Senegalese artists received special treatment. In the late 1980s, as Jean Loup Pivin was working as an architect in Mali to build the National Museum in Bamako, he travelled to Dakar and met Senegalese photographer and filmmaker Bouna Médoune Seye (1956-).[87] It was Seye, who introduced Pivin to the work of Mama Casset, one of the most popular Senegalese photographers of the independence era.[88] It was also Seye who conducted research, interviewing Casset and collecting works from among the photographer's best customers.[89] Seye's commitment to the study and promotion of the photographic history of his country is an important example that counters the assumption that the field of African photography has been shaped only by Europeans and Americans.

Following the fire that burned down Casset's studio in 1984, the vintage prints collected and stored by Dakarois families were all that was left of his oeuvre. The joint effort between Pivin, Seye and Bertrand Hosti, an administrator at the Centre Culturel Français (CCF) in Dakar, led to the organization of the first *Mois de la Photographie* (fig. 0.2-3).[90] The exhibition took place in Dakar in 1992, and at once paid homage to Casset and presented the latest works of contemporary Senegalese photographers.[91] To my knowledge, this *Mois de la Photographie* was the first exhibition solely devoted to African photographers produced anywhere. Unfortunately, Casset passed away a few months before the official opening and thus never attended the event.

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[87] Between 1982 and 1985 Pivin was responsible for the construction of the National Museum of Mali in Bamako and the restoration of the Royal Palace in Porto Novo, Benin. (Bouna Médoune Seye, personal communication, Marseilles, France, August 2011; Dakar, Senegal, May 2013; Jean Loup Pivin, personal communication, Paris, France, July 2011 and August 2013).

[88] Hosti Bertrand, Personal communication via Skype, July 2013.

[89] Bouna Médoune Seye, Personal communication, Dakar, May 2013; Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication Paris, July 2011 and August 2013.

[90] The Centre Culturel Français played a major influence in financing, exhibiting and training artists in West Africa. For an overview of the role of the CCF in Senegal see: Samuel Petiot, "La Politique Culturelle Française Au Sénégal Depuis L'indépendance: Le Centre Culturel Français De Dakar " (MA Thesis, Université de Nantes, 2003-2004).

[91] These included Touré Mandemory, Matar Ndour and others.

Following the 1992 show, his works were exhibited in Europe and the US, entering the international art market.[92]

After Revue Noire launched its journal of the same name in May 1991, the work of Mama Casset (fig. 0.4) was included in their special issue on African photography in September 1992 and in the 1994 publication on the pioneers of studio photography in Senegal.[93] The first monograph appeared in 2005, edited by an Italian publishing house in collaboration with Casset's nephew.[94] If Revue Noire's broad objective was that of documenting the dynamism of the contemporary African art scene, Mama Casset became one of their leading artists, embodying the continent's modernity and sophistication.[95]

Although Revue Noire partly built its success on the promotion of Senegalese photography, since the early 1990s this area of African photography has received surprisingly little attention. The French Philippe David and David Prochaska were the first scholars to study early photography in Senegal.[96] Both focused on French photographers producing postcards between the 1870s and the 1920s, and their contribution is indispensable to understanding how the first studios functioned. More recently, Patricia Hickling has developed this research further with two articles on early French photographers working in Senegal, namely Bonnevide and

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[92] Some of the earliest group exhibitions include: *Revue Noire et les photographes africains,* Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles, Paris 1992; *African Photography*, Studio Museum of Harlem, New York 1993; *Self Evident*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (UK), 1995; *L'Afrique par elle-même /Africa by Africans,* Maison européenne de la Photographie, Paris, 1998.

[93] Jean Loup Pivin, ed. *Revue Noire: Dakar Senegal*, vol. 7 (Paris Revue Noire, 1992-3); Mama Casset, *Mama Casset Et Les Précurseurs De La Photographie Au Sénégal: Meïssa Gaye, Mix Gueye, Adama Sylla, Alioune Diouf, Doro Sy, Doudou Diop, Salla Casset*, Soleil (Paris: Revue noire, 1994).

[94] *Mama Casset: Un Pomeriggio a Dakar Takussanu Ndakaru* (Pisa: Tagete Edizioni, 2005); *Mama Casset*, 1 vols., Biblioteca Photobolsillo Biblioteca De Fotografos Africanos (Madrid: La Fabrica, 2011).

[95] Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication, Paris, France, August 2013.

[96] Philippe Fortier Francois-Edmond David, *Inventaire Gènèral Des Cartes Postales Fortier*, 3 vols. (Paris: Fostier, 1986); Philippe David, "Hostalier – Noal: Un Duel De Photographes Au Journal Officiel Du Sénégal, Il Y a Cent Ans," *Images et Memoires* 14 (2006); *Ernest Noirot (1851-1913): Un Administrateur Colonial Hors Normes*, Relire; Variation: Collection Relire (Paris: Karthala, 2012); David Prochaska, "Fantasia of the Photothéque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal," *African Arts* 24, no. 4 (1991); David Prochaska and Jordana Mendelson, eds., *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*, Refiguring Modernism (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

Fortier.[97] While bringing to light important archival and historical documentation, particularly David and Prochaska tend to focus mostly on the producers rather than the local consumers who were commissioning and buying portraits—thus their work presents the medium as initially monopolized by the French.

In tandem with these scholars, other collectors and researchers have worked to fill in some of the gaps in the history of photography in Senegal. Xavier Ricou, an architect and collector based in Senegal, arrived at photography through his research on the genealogies of Senegalese families and colonial iconography.[98] Ricou belongs to one of the most important *métis* families in Senegal; his ancestors moved from France to Senegal in the late 18th century. During his free time Ricou conducted extensive research, collecting digital images from families in Dakar and Saint Louis. On his website and Facebook page *Senegalmetis*, Ricou grouped thousands of images, identifying sitters, photographers, and locations. Needless to say, Ricou's meticulous research offers precious historical information, particularly to foreign scholars, who otherwise would not have access to these intimate family stories and connections.

Besides the material published on Revue Noire and compiled by Frédérique Chapuis and Bouna Médoune Seye on photographic practices of the independence era, Jennifer Bajorek has written numerous articles on the relation between photographic and decolonization practices. Bajorek not only reviews the work of photographers such as Doudou Diop, whose role had not been sufficiently studied before, she also considers new genres such as the political and

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[97] Patricia Hickling, "Bonnevide: Photographie Des Colonies: Early Studio Photography in Senegal," *Visual Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (2014); "The Early Photographs of Edmond Fortier: Documenting Postcards from Senegal," *African Research & Documentation* 102 (2007).

[98] Besides Ricou, a number of other writers also based in Senegal have been researching the early history of photography in Senegal. Among them the Senegal-based Frenchmen Gilles Le Ouzon and Pierre Rosière have written short articles on early French photographers in Senegal such as Pierre Tacher. Pierre Rosière, "Pierre Tacher Éditeur-Photographe À Saint-Louis Du Sénégal," in *Unpublished document* (Dakar, Senegal no date); Gilles Le Ouzon and Pierre Tacher, *Pierre Tacher. Saint-Louis Du Sénégal Et Sa Région 1908-1925 - Album Photographique* (Saint-Louis du Sénégal: L'Agneau carnivore, 2011); Xavier Ricou, *Trésor De L'iconographie Du Sénégal Colonial* (Paris: Riveneuve éditions, 2007).

magazine reportages conducted by photographers in the 1950s and 60s. Bajorek's research is valuable in that it expands the significance of photography beyond formal portraiture and studio practices.

Interestingly, writings on the history of photography in Senegal have little overlap with the more voluminous literature on modern and contemporary art in Senegal. The École de Dakar and Negritude movement have attracted a lot of attention in the field of African art studies. Beginning with Ima Ebong and Elisabeth Harney, who wrote the first publications historicizing these movements, the literature on modern and contemporary art in Senegal has greatly expanded, with scholars producing monographs of specific artists such as Moustapha Dimé, studying the relation between state and the promotion of art, and situating these artists in a transnational framework.[99] While in Chapter Four I try to bridge this gap by approaching the work of independence-era photographers against the ideas of modernity and modernism promoted by Senegalese intellectuals in the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial time, more research should be done to discuss how different media were received in this period.

[99] Ima Ebong, "Negritude: Between Mask and Flag: Senegalese Cultural Ideology and the École De Dakar," in *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art* (New York: Center for African Art, 1991); Elizabeth Harney, "The Ecole De Dakar: Pan-Africanism in Paint and Textile," *African Arts* 35, no. 3 (2002); Joanna Grabski, "The Historical Invention and Contemporary Practice of Modern Senegalese Art: Three Generations of Artists in Dakar" (Thesis (Ph.D.), Indiana University, 2001); Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960-1995*, Objects/Histories (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Joanna Grabski, "Painting Fictions/Painting History: Modernist Pioneers at Senegal's Ecole Des Arts," *African Arts* 39, no. 1 (2006); Joshua Cohen, "Masks and the Modern: African/European Encounters in 20th-Century Art" (Thesis (Ph.D.), Columbia University, 2014); Kart, "From Direct Carving to Récupération: The Art of Moustapha Dimé in Post-Independence Senegal 1974-1997."; Kinsey Katchka, "Putting Art in Place: Exhibiting Community & Cultural Policy in 20th Century Senegal" (Dissertation: PhD Thesis, Indiana University, 2001); Iolanda Pensa, "La Biennale De Dakar Comme Projet De Coopération Et De Développement" (Thesis (Ph.D.), École des hautes études en sciences sociales; Politecnico di Milano, 2011); Abdou Sylla, *L'esthétique De Senghor Et L'école De Dakar : Essai* (Dakar: Éditions Feu de brousse, 2006); *Arts Plastiques Et État: Trente-Cinq Ans De Mécénat Au Sénégal* (Dakar: IFAN-CH. A. Diop, Université C. A. Diop de Dakar, 1998).

Lastly, a large number of scholars working in a variety of fields have touched on Senegal's photographic practices.[100] While these authors' contributions are addressed more specifically in the following chapters, it is important to note that specialists in history, anthropology, visual culture, fashion, and philosophy have all addressed the significance of photography.

To conclude, I believe it is important to recognize that until now, the majority of publications on Senegalese photography have not been produced by art historians, but either by scholars trained in other disciplines, or enthusiasts who have researched this topic in their free time.[101] A brief search online reveals numerous websites, blogs and Facebook pages devoted to the histories of photography in Senegal and West Africa, with followers who collect, comment, and contribute with their own family photos. This phenomenon offers further confirmation of the popularity of this medium.

Research and methodology

When I started my dissertation research in Senegal, my interest mostly lay in contemporary photographic production. In one of my earliest trips to Dakar in 2010, I interviewed contemporary photographers and curators who could help me map the field. Yet as I continued my interviews, I was astounded by the quantity and quality of historical photos that decorated Senegalese households. Slowly, the project's chronological frame shifted to include the colonial era, and eventually the contemporary period was left out altogether.

[100] Here I am thinking of Allen and Polly Roberts, Mamadou Diouf, Bachir Diagne, Hilary Jones, Mustafa Hudita, Charlotte Pezeril *inter alia*.
[101] Here I am thinking of Fatou Niang Siga, Serigne N'Diaye, Xavier Ricou, Gilles Le Ouzon, Pierre Rosière, Frédérique Chapuis, Jean-Luc Le Bras and Mai Diop etc.

Considering the limited literature on this topic, most of the content and images that are presented in the dissertation are drawn from field and archival work. This project builds on over twenty months of fieldwork in Senegal (2010; 2011-13; 2014) and targeted trips to France (2011; 2012; 2013) and Italy (2011; 2012). Fieldwork was essential in order to identify the most important photographers and understand the changing significance of portraiture in its early phases. Since my first research trip, I interviewed about one hundred and forty people in France (Paris and Marseilles), Senegal (Dakar, Saint Louis, Keur Massar, Thiès, Tiwawone, Ziguinchor, Touba, Joal-Fadiouth, Djourbel, Guédiawaye, Gorée, Rufisque, Kaolack and Podor), Italy (Verona and Milan) and in the US (New York). For my interviews, I sought to contact and discuss these issues with a broad variety of subjects. While the majority were photographers and their descendants, I also contacted photo clients, artists (painters, singers, sculptors and glass painters), curators, collectors, university professors, archivists, tailors, *marabouts*, photo lab technicians, journalists, filmmakers and novelists. Each and every one of them provided wonderful insights on this rich history. I learnt very quickly that interviewing is an art, and a difficult one at that. It took me many months to refine the ability to articulate my questions and establish solid relationships with the people who were willing to share their knowledge and time with me.[102]

Having studied Wolof—the most common spoken language in Senegal—for three years at Columbia University and then at the Baobab Center in Dakar, during my fieldwork I employed both Wolof and French. Nevertheless, the majority of the interviews conducted in Senegal would not have been possible without the assistance of the Saint Louisian photographer Ibrahima Thiam. Very knowledgeable about photography and interested in its history and preservation,

[102] I am particularly grateful to Prof. Z.S. Strother who spent significant time discussing possible questions and interview strategies throughout the years.

Ibrahima played a major role as my field assistant, especially in helping me understand Senegal's social codes.

While between 2010 and 2012 I travelled across the country in an effort to study photographic practices outside Dakar and Saint Louis, eventually I decided to focus my dissertation on portraiture as practiced in Dakar, Saint Louis and Touba. There I encountered photographers and collectors whose archives were particularly rich. Still, I am aware of having barely scratched the surface of this history. Further research should be conducted, particularly in Thiès and Kaolack whose economic roles during the colonial era made them important centers for photography.

Archival research was conducted in Senegal (Dakar and Saint Louis), France (Paris, Nantes and Aix-En-Provence) and the US (Washington and New York). With the exception of the archives at Revue Noire in Paris and the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation du Sénégal (CRDS) in Saint Louis that hold vintage and digital prints by Senegalese photographers, the majority of the archives in France, Senegal and the US tended to feature mostly portraits taken by Western photographers. Accordingly, the bulk of the photographic corpus collected in digital format during fieldwork and included in this dissertation derives from private archives and collections, most of which are still in Senegal.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One discusses the beginnings of photography in Senegal, focusing on the establishment of portraiture (1860s–1920s). Soon after the introduction of the camera, photographers arrived in the colony from West Africa, France, China and the United States. They worked for the French military or arrived as individual businessmen; their sitters were both

"colonized" and "colonizers," colonial subjects and *originaires*—the dwellers of four cities that were granted French citizenship during colonial rule. The first photographic studios became sites where Senegalese patrons—with their distinct coiffures, fashions and poses—inaugurated a form of modern portraiture.

Rather than imagining a Foucauldian scenario, whereby the colonial administrators fashioned their African subjects into passive stereotypes, original archival research reveals that most Senegalese were introduced to photography through the work of successful African entrepreneurs. A new literature is developing on the complex relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, one that moves beyond the binary model of domination/resistance. Scholars such as Shaden Tageldin encourage us to look at the "dynamics of cultural attraction between presumed enemies."[103] The literature on photography in Africa, where this medium has often been understood as "an apparatus of ideological control," to use John Tagg's words, has rarely focused on the fruitful exchanges between foreign and local, photographers and sitters.[104] Without dismissing the shattering impact of colonialism in dislocating the African subject, Chapter One discusses the beginnings of photographic portraiture by considering the roles of photo I.D. cards, *cartes-de-visite*, cabinet prints and postcards within this ambiguous "contact zone."[105]

Chapter Two discusses the popularization of the genre of portraiture in a country whose art production, before the nineteenth century, did not feature masquerade or sculptural traditions that included representations of the human figure. While *cartes-de-visite*, photographs and prints

[103] Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011), 7.
[104] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, 166.
[105] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession* (1991); *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Trasnculturation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 7.

circulated among the elite, chromos and glass paintings were responsible for the popularization of the genre of portraiture.

In the 1910s, the Governor-General of French West Africa Amédée William Merlaud-Ponty began to notice an unprecedented circulation of images across the Sub-Saharan region. They were not manufactured in France, nor were they produced locally; rather, they were imported into Senegal from Germany, Italy, North Africa and the Middle East. This visual material included chromolithographs and lithographs that were both political and religious in content. Perceived as a threat to France's colonial project, this material underwent the close scrutiny of the colonial administration, which at times chose to destroy or sequester works they perceived and described as "seditious."[106] Besides revealing France's desperate attempts to insulate and control its subjects, Governor William Ponty's observation is a precious litmus test regarding the circulation of images in Senegal in the 1910s. It allows us to trace the emergence of new networks of exchange and patterns of consumption, all revolving around images.

Islam has often been blamed for the late introduction of print technologies and for an essentially aniconic art practice. In Chapter Two, I argue that in Senegal the opposite was the case. In Senegal, Islam was responsible for the introduction and circulation of devotional portraits in the form of glass paintings, chromolithographs and photographs in the 1890s. The proliferation of images of saints and religious leaders in the French colony not only popularized portraiture, but triggered and cultivated a local taste for portrait images that is still very much alive today. Inspired by the cult of saints inherent to Sufi practices, the desire to display portraits within one's home and for one's personal devotional practices made this genre indispensable.

The third chapter focuses on two series produced between the 1910s and 1940s by two unidentified amateur photographers from Saint Louis, one *métis* and the other Wolof. Portraits,

[106] ANS 19G1, 15th November 1911. See annex 2.1 for the full letter.

often taken in the interiors of the sitters' homes, attest to the popularity of photography: the walls behind the sitters, crammed with *photo-cartes* and dozens of smaller prints, reveal the ubiquity of photography in Saint Louis by the interwar period. Urban Senegalese regularly exchanged their portraits and used *photo-cartes* as a form of correspondence, incorporating the technology into their social routines. The decoration of salons with photos of family members, friends and charismatic figures became a sign of prestige, and part of a rooted practice in Wolof culture called *xoymet*. I argue that these snapshots, displayed in homes and archived in albums, delineate the birth of a new subjectivity; one that neither mimicked the customs of the colonizer, nor neatly conformed to Wolof cultures.

The last chapter considers the studio practices of the 1960s, when photography became a "social imperative," to use Geoffrey Batchen's terminology.[107] By juxtaposing the work of Mama Casset—one of the most popular photographers working in the capital—with that of Oumar Ka, an itinerant photographer based in the interior of the country—I revisit the association of photography's modernity with urban living and propose instead that it can also be related to "rural" tastes and styles.

Based on two years of research in Senegal, this dissertation is the first in-depth study on the history of photography in the country. Tracing the emergence of modern subjectivities in Senegal, my research at once puts the spotlight on the medium's local articulations while also situating these expressions within global networks of exchange. Given Senegal's privileged status within *la Grande France* and its leading role in shaping ideas of African modernity and modernism, this analysis will contribute to our understanding of the relation between photography and modernity in Africa.

[107] Batchen, *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History*, 5.

CHAPTER ONE

Decentralizing the gaze:
Beginnings of portraiture

- *Hep! Hep! Un porteur!*
- *Un porteur? Me répond un compagnon, vous avez la folie de l'aristocratie. Les nègres ne portent pas au Sénégal, monsieur, ils votent […]*
- *Ils votent! Ils votent!*

Albert Londres, *Terre d'ébène* (1929)[1]

In 1928 the French journalist Albert Londres travelled to French West Africa for the newspaper *Petit Parisien*. Like most French travelers who visited the region, he arrived by boat to Dakar, "*la porte de notre empire noire."*[2] *Terre d'ébène,* the book where Londres narrates his travel from Senegal to the Congo, condemning colonial exploitation, opens with an episode in which the writer arrives at the Senegalese harbor. When Londres disembarks he looks for a porter. At his cry, a fellow traveler responds: "A porter? You must be crazy. Blacks in Senegal do not carry things, Sir, they vote!"[3]

When Senegal became part of the French colonial empire in the 1850s, the Four Communes of Saint Louis, Dakar, Gorée and Rufisque were granted municipal status.[4] That

[1] Albert Londres, "Terre D'ébène (La Traite Des Noirs)," (Paris: A. Michel, 1929), 13-4.
[2] Ibid., 10. I wish to thank Prof. Mamadou Diouf for pointing me to Londres's publications.
[3] Ibid., 13.
[4] The literature on the *Quatre Communes* is extensive. For further reference see: Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial."; H. O. Idowu, "The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880," ibid.9 (1968); Hargreaves, "The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes,1900-1920 by G. Wesley Johnson."; Johnson, *Naissance Du Sénégal Contemporain: Aux Origines De La Vie Politique Moderne (1900-1920)*; Robinson, "Ethnography and Customary Law in Senegal (Ethnographie Et Droit Coutumier Au Sénégal)."; Coquery-Vidrovitch, "La Ville Coloniale: 'Lieu De Colonisation' Et Métissage Culturel."; Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century

meant that these four cities had the rights of French communes and that their residents were automatically granted French citizenship.[5] While the significance of being a French citizen in Senegal shifted over time, the inhabitants of these four cities, called *originaires*, nevertheless continued to enjoy the right to vote. The introduction of this fundamental civil right shifted Senegal's status within *la Grande France.* Coincidentally, photography arrived during this period of transition. The first photographic studios became sites where the first Senegalese sitters—with their coiffures, fashions and poses—inaugurated modern portraiture in the colony.

This chapter discusses the early history of photography in Senegal, focusing on the establishment of portraiture between the 1860s and early 1920s. Soon after the introduction of the camera, photographers travelled to the colony from neighboring countries, as well as China, Europe and the United States. They worked for the French military and arrived as individual businessmen; their sitters were both "colonized" and "colonizers," both colonial subjects—or *sujets français*—and *originaires*—or *habitants*.[6] This chapter considers *cartes-de-visite*, cabinet prints and postcards, and the migration of images across different supports, embracing Geoffrey Batchen's encouragement to trace the endless transformations and manifestations of the photographic image.[7] By discussing the various formats and circumstances within which these images were produced and circulated, it will be possible to analyze the changing significance of portraiture as the images travelled across media and space. What happens when the same portrait

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Globalization Project."; Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial."; Mamadou Diouf, "Les 'Évolués' Et La Change Dans L'afrique Occidentale Française Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914-1956 by James E. Genova," ibid.47, no. 1 (2006); Robinson, "The Murids: Surveillance and Collaboration," 201. On the imposition of voting rights and demands for tribunals see Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa*, 131-7.

[5] Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," 673.

[6] While a large number of amateur and professional photographers passed through Senegal in the nineteenth century, this dissertation focuses on the establishment of portraiture in the country. It does not seek to provide a comprehensive study. Those photographers whose portraits were consumed exclusively outside the colony will not be considered.

[7] Batchen, "Double Displacement: Photography and Dissemination."

is printed on a postcard, included in an anthropological publication and mounted on a *carte-de-visite?* How do these formats shape our interpretation of the image and understanding of the sitter's identity?

If the genesis of photography continues to be one of the most controversial topics in the history of the technology, the study of the early production and consumption of photographs in Africa is even more critical, as it is imbricated in the relation between colonizer and colonized.[8] In Senegal, the French administration did not segregate its colonial subjects along ethnic lines as other European countries did. Rather, by establishing the Four Communes, it created a two-tier system that distinguished *originaires* from *sujets français*—that is, those who lived in urban areas and had the right to vote from those who lived in the interior of the country and did not enjoy the same rights.[9] As Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch writes, eventually the *originaires* were distinguished by "their lifestyle, their cuisine, their way of walking, wearing perfume, their conception of beauty and soon a juridical specificity: in short, the creation of an urban space of civility."[10] According to Wesley Johnson, their political privileges were greater than those of Creoles in British colonies such as Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and yet, they were less European in culture—the majority having remained Muslim.[11]

Considering the uniquely privileged status of the *originaires* in West Africa, we can easily imagine that they were among the first to have access to the latest technologies such as photographic portraiture. Yet, if the majority of the *originaires* were Muslim and portraiture did

[8] For the literature on early history of photography in Europe and the US see: Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981); Helmut Gernsheim, *The Origins of Photography* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1982); Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*; Jean-Claude Pinson, *Speculating Daguerre: Art and Enterprise in the Work of L.J.M. Daguerre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[9] Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," 672.
[10] Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial," 288.
[11] Johnson, "The Senegalese Urban Elite, 1900-1945," 139.

not previously exist in Senegal, how can we account for photography's success there? I argue that the *originaires* embraced this technology because it responded directly to their needs in their struggle to "assimilate and not be assimilated," to use the language of Senegal's first president Léopold Sédar Senghor.[12] Furthermore, as photo I.D.s were required for the *originaires* by the French colonial system, photography became associated with a treasured document conveying elite status.

By framing local practices as processes that involved photographers, sitters and viewers, this chapter is close in spirit to the work of those scholars who have attempted to articulate practices of appropriation, circulation and displacement. A new literature is developing on the complex relationship between the colonized and the colonizer: moving beyond the postcolonial binary model of domination/resistance, scholars such as Shaden Tageldin are encouraging us to look at the "dynamics of cultural attraction between presumed enemies."[13] The literature on photography in Africa, where this medium has often been understood as "an apparatus of ideological control," to use John Tagg's words, has rarely focused on the fruitful exchanges between foreign and local, photographers and sitters.[14] By examining the commissions of these patrons, I will challenge unilateral conceptions of photography as an apparatus of ideological control monopolized by the colonial authority. By understanding identity not as a boundary, but rather "as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging the subject," to use Barry Flood's words, we are able to see the photograph as one of these "objects of translation," which is born from these stories of interactions, and whose significance is constantly shifting.[15]

[12] Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté* vol. 1-5 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 39.
[13] Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt*, 7.
[14] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, 166.
[15] Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*, 3.

While the power differential between colonizer and colonized cannot be dismissed and should never be minimized, this approach allows all sorts of behaviors to emerge and coexist. Antonio Gramsci stated that "the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears."[16] This chapter will examine precisely these symptoms within this ambiguous "contact zone."[17]

The arrival of the camera: first encounters with photography 1840-60s

In the literature of African photography, it is often assumed that Africans first encountered the camera during humiliating practices of colonial surveillance that included the imposition of I.D. pictures as part of the state's mission to control and monitor its subjects. In 2009, Tobias Wendl wrote, "most Ghanaians first encountered photography while taking I.D. pictures. Due to its 'indexical nature' […] people were symbolically subjected to the public eye of the colonial authorities."[18] Scholars have written extensively on the relation between photography and the state. In colonial contexts and particularly in Africa, this nexus is often assumed, but it has been sparsely documented. Archival research on the arrival and introduction of this technology is crucial in order to understand how the medium has come to be understood at the local level.

In the case of Senegal, very little is known regarding the arrival of the first camera. As Hickling pointed out, if few publications are available on the early history of francophone Africa,

[16] Gramsci quoted in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression," in *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, ed. Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 222.
[17] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Trasnculturation* 7; "Arts of the Contact Zone."
[18] Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," 81.

even fewer are those on early Senegalese photographic practices.[19] In 1998 the French journalist Frédérique Chapuis provided the first accounts of it in the Revue Noire anthology.[20] Following her archival research, Chapuis managed to trace some of the earliest colonial missions that employed photography in Senegal. Although in her succinct article Chapuis did not include archival references or extended quotations, my recent archival research confirms some of her findings.

On January 1st 1857, the Captain of the French Infantry, Dérème was sent to Senegal. In a letter to the Governor of Senegal, Louis Faidherbe, the Minister of the Colonies suggested that Dérème, who happened to know how to take pictures, should photograph their main establishments in Saint Louis and the wider region. The Minister wrote: "in a moment when the public attention in France seems to have a certain favor on our Senegalese colony, some photos would give a sense of the country and its inhabitants and would be received with interest."[21] The Governor Faidherbe[22] received the Minister's letter with considerable pleasure. Ultimately, Dérème was not able to take photos, as his technical equipment was ruined in the shipwreck of the boat Podor.[23] By August 1857, Dérème had still not been able to produce photographs; yet, the *Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies* continued to explore the possibility of having some photos taken. The Minister insisted: "I would testify one more time to all the interest that the

[19] In investigating the introduction of the photographic technology in Francophone Africa, the possible role of religious institutions such as missions has been put aside. Erika Nimis and Pierre Trémaux, *Photographes De Bamako De 1935 À Nos Jours*, Collection Soleil (Paris: Éditions Revue noire, 1998), 11.
[20] Frédérique Chapuis, "The Pioneers of Saint-Louis," in *Anthologie De La Photographie Africaine Et De L'océan Indien* (Paris: Revue noire, 1998).
[21] Letter 20th January 1857, ANS, 1B71
[22] Louis Léon César Faidherbe was Governor of Senegal between 1854 and 1865 with a brief interval between 1861 and 1863. The work he accomplished in French West Africa constitutes his most enduring legacy. At that time France possessed in Senegal little else than the town of Saint-Louis and a strip of coast. Explorers had, however, made known the riches and possibilities of the Niger regions, and Faidherbe formed the design of adding those countries to the French dominions. Indeed, he is considered the creator of modern Senegal and the principal architect of the conquest of Senegambia.
[23] Letter 27th March 1857, ANS, B71

employment of photography can offer to Senegal in popularizing the knowledge of the country."[24]

Although these efforts went in vain, Chapuis found evidence that ultimately a camera did arrive in 1862.[25] It remains unclear if the 1857 mission was the first attempt to bring a camera into Senegal, and to a certain extent it seems relatively late. Considering Senegal's strategic location on the Atlantic coast and political status as the capital of French West Africa, it is surprising that the colonial administration only managed to import this technology almost twenty years after its invention.

A few avenues could still be investigated. Larry Yarak demonstrated that the French brig of war *La Malouine* arrived in Ghana in 1840 armed with a daguerreotype that was given to Captain Bouët by the French government.[26] It is possible that before stopping at Elmina in Ghana, Bouët had passed by the harbor of Gorée, but no evidence of this has been found so far. John Hannavy mentions that Jules Itier—a government functionary in the French trade ministry—made daguerreotypes on trade missions, including one to Senegal in 1842.[27] Itier's photographic activity in the colony is one of the rare cases to have been documented, but it is possible that other traders had also brought their photographic equipment along on their business trips.

These attempts to bring photography to Senegal in the 1850s and 60s coincided with a dramatic shift in the political and economic life of the colony. Under Governor Faidherbe's energetic expansionism, Senegal's territory was consolidated, a new agriculture-based economy launched, and new assimilation policies enacted through the establishment of the four communes. It is possible that the desire to "popularize the knowledge of the country," as the Minister stated

[24] Letter 27th August 1857, ANS, 1B72
[25] I was not been able to find at ANS primary sources that confirmed Chapuis's statement.
[26] Larry W. Yarak, "Early Photography in Elmina," *Ghana Study Council Newsletter* 8 (1995): 9.
[27] John Hannavy, *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, 2 vols. (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 1405.

in 1857, was motivated by the necessity of gathering popular support for the ongoing colonial mission. Nonetheless, from the available sources it seems that the introduction of the camera did not occur as part of a cohesive strategy; rather, Dérème's technical knowledge and opportune timing in travelling to Senegal are coincidental.

While these exchanges prove that the photographic technology was known and appreciated, it is crucial to underline that in the case of French West Africa, the camera was *not* immediately employed within an organized system of documentation and surveillance as it was in the case of France or other colonies, such as British India.[28] Photo historian Christopher Pinney argues that the early history of photography in India went hand in hand with Britain's rising anxiety regarding the identity of its colonial subjects, a distress that was mitigated only through their attempts to fix them photographically. The colonial enterprise capitalized on photography's indexical ability to, for instance, identify offenders and victims and classify them under ethnographic types, as done in the late nineteenth century publication *The People of India*.[29]

In the case of Senegal, archival findings reveal that in 1911, the Governor General of French West Africa William Ponty established that *no foreigner* would be let into the region

[28] McCauley maintains that by 1853 in France, the application of photography for passport identification had already been suggested. By 1854, the inspector general of the French penal system was planning to photograph the most dangerous criminals. Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *A.A. Disderi and the Carte-De-Visite Portrait Photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 27. This initiative, that employed the science of physiognomy including measurements and biographical data, materialized only in 1874 with the founding of the Institute of Criminal Photography in Paris. Between 1884 and 1914 in France, half a million people had been classified. However it was only beginning in October 1940 that all French citizens had to carry an identification card that included the owner's photo and fingerprints. Tanya Elder, *Capturing Change: The Practice of Malian Photography, 1930s-1990s*, Linköping Studies in Arts and Science (Linköping: Linköping University, 1997), 171-2. For more references on the use of photography in France see: Andrè-Adolphe-Eugène Disdèri and Michel Frizot, *Identitès: De Disdèri Au Photomaton*, Photo Copies (Paris: Centre national de la photographie, 1985). For the British colony see: Liz Wells, *Photography : A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London New York: Routledge, 2000), 82.

[29] For more details see: John Falconer, ""A Pure Labor of Love": A Publishing History of the People of India," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)Ing Race and Place*, ed. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (2004); Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, 37-46.

without an identity card featuring a photo.[30] While it is difficult to assess the extent to which the colonial administration managed to implement this policy, in the 1920s the colonial archives kept files with photos of a small group of Anglophone Africans residing in Senegal who were involved with Panafrican movements such as that led by Marcus Garvey (fig.1.1).[31] Although this was the only reference I was able to find at the Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS), it also emerged during oral interviews that photo I.D.s were introduced for the dwellers of the *Quatre Communes* during the colonial period as a means to distinguish the *originaires* of these four cities from the other colonial subjects.[32]

As discussed previously, the *originaires,* as the residents of the four communes, had specific rights such as that of voting and sending their elected representative to the French National Assembly. In this sense, they may have needed a document with an identifying photograph to differentiate them from other colonial subjects. Research suggests that the distinction between *originaires* and *sujets français* was not experienced just during elections, but also in daily life. While it has not been possible so far to establish a precise date for the possible imposition of photo I.D.s upon the *originaires,* under these conditions photography became a treasured instrument documenting elite status. The discriminatory implementation of photo I.D.s could have associated the medium not so much with surveillance—where the degenerate or deviant subjects are categorized and monitored—but rather with the privilege that distinguished elite classes of citizens.

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[30] "*Nul immigrant étranger ne sera autorise a résider sur le Territoire des Colonies du Gouvernement General de l'Afrique occidentale française qu'après production de son acte de naissance et d'un extrait néant du casier judicaire […] Ces pièces ne seront valables qu'a la condition d'être dument établies, traduites en langue française, légalisées et accompagnées d'une photographie de l'intéresse, également certifies."* ANS May 1st 1911, Folder 21G36.

[31] ANS 21G126 (108)

[32] This issue emerged in several interviews conducted in Senegal in May 2014. This dynamic was confirmed by Prof. Mamadou Diouf and Prof. Bachir Diagne, New York 2014.

This association of photo identification with privilege is rather unusual. More commonly in the colonial context, the imposition of photo I.D. is associated with colonial surveillance and brutality. The imposition of documents that include photographic imaging is one of the most powerful strategies employed by the state to control its subjects. This dynamic is encapsulated in one of John Tagg's most cited quotations: "Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations, which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents, which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence."[33] Tagg's main argument is structured against Roland Barthes's formalist approach, which allows the latter to read his dead mother's photo as *evidence* of her existence: her portrait asserting that she "has been there."[34] Tagg challenges the equation established by Barthes between evidence and photography, not by dismissing the technical ability of the medium to produce evidence, but rather by identifying the historical moment—the second half of the nineteenth century—when the "emergence of new institutions and new practices of observation and record keeping" began.[35] Tagg identifies a historical shift in power relations that necessitated and produced these techniques of representation and regulation. Starting from that moment, the second half of the nineteenth century, photography was endowed with an evidentiary power. According to Tagg, this quality is not inherent to the medium, but produced by external conditions, in this case governmental practices.

It is not surprising that Tagg's model became particularly popular among anthropologists who were studying photographic practices during the colonial time. In recovering institutional practices that employed photography, anthropologists accounted for the oppressiveness of the

[33] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, 63.
[34] Ibid., 1.
[35] Ibid., 5.

colonial system.[36] As mentioned, Christopher Pinney discusses the beginnings of photography in India when this medium was appreciated for its "stern fidelity": "it was precisely photography's indexicality, and its superiority over other more equivocal signs which gave it such importance in the colonial imagination."[37] According to Tagg and Pinney, social practices *rather than* photography's intrinsic iconic power placed photography "within the truth."

Likewise in the case of Africa too, the rhetoric of Africans' first encounter with the camera as one defined by coercion is a recurrent one.[38] In his study of Ugandan photography, Richard Vokes argues that I.D. pictures were circulating since the 1920s.[39] Similarly, Jean-François Werner addresses the processes of photographic individualization in Ivory Coast, but he does not distinguish the colonial from the post-colonial era while talking about the imposition of photo I.Ds.[40] While the scholars' chronological frameworks are unclear, they both present the photographic medium as an apparatus of ideological control.

In the past ten years photo historians have started to question and bypass this "Foucauldian driven configuration of surveillance, gaze and objectification."[41] As Elizabeth Edwards has argued, this model has the tendency to dichotomize power relations while becoming "analytically paralyzing in their trades in absolutes," and while silencing and disempowering

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[36] Appadurai argues for instance: "the point here is that all colonial photography is in some sense part of a project of archiving and documentation, whether the eye of the particular photographer is part of the gaze of curiosity, of horror, of conversation or of criminology." He talks about the "taxonomizing and coercive techniques of colonial observers and the colonial state." Arjun Appadurai, "The Colonial Backdrop - Photography," *Afterimage* 24, no. 5 March-April (1997): 5.

[37] Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, 20.

[38] Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," 81. Also Geary wrote: "it would be an overgeneralization to state that colonialism always led to an aggressive dehumanizing photographic interaction. In the majority of cases, certainly the relationship was dehumanizing, but there were a few notable exceptions. The nature of the relationship depended on the photographer, the photographic subject, and the cultural and historical circumstances of both." Christaud M. Geary, *Images from Bamum: German Colonial Photography in Cameroon* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of African Art, 1988), 35.

[39] Richard Vokes, "Reflections on a Complex (and Cosmopolitan) Archive: Postcards and Photography in Early Colonial Uganda, C.1904—1928," *History and Anthropology* 21, no. 4 (2010): 379-80.

[40] Jean-François Werner, "Photography and Individualization in Contemporary Africa: An Ivorian Case-Study," *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2001): 252.

[41] Morton and Edwards, *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame*, 1.

precisely those it intended to valorize.[42] Edwards *inter alia* has sought to complicate previous assumptions about colonial relations further by studying the instability of the photograph and its meanings.

More recently, Z.S. Strother challenged prior assumptions about first interactions with the camera specifically in Africa. In her words:

> Rather than imagine a Foucauldian scenario whereby colonial administrators forced African subjects to sit for humiliating portraits as an exercise of surveillance and control, we must think through the implications of the fact that most Africans were introduced to photography through a cosmopolitan chain of African entrepreneurs who both created and responded to African desires while crossing ethnic, language, and international borders.[43]

As we shall see in Chapters Two and Four, in Senegal the popularization of photography as a medium and portraiture as a genre at the level of the masses—that is, in both urban and rural areas—took place decades later, and, as Strother argues, within a complex network of exchange and consumption that included African entrepreneurs.

Historian Frederick Cooper has warned against scholars who, in writing on the colonial period, privilege theoretical approaches over historical analysis.[44] Even if in Senegal photo I.D.s may have been imposed *selectively* during the colonial times, it seems that more generally across the continent photography was used systematically only by the postcolonial rather than the colonial state. In this regard, Erika Nimis and Tanya Elder agree that in Mali I.D. cards were established after independence. Bogumil Jewsiewicki too maintains that in Zaïre it was Mobutu who imposed the requirement for a photo on identity cards in the early 1970s "as a measure of

[42] Ibid.
[43] Z. S. Strother, "'A Photograph Steals the Soul": The History of an Idea," in *Portraiture in African Worlds*, ed. John Peffer and Elisabeth Cameron (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 190.
[44] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 292.

authenticity."[45] This data opens up new questions as to how the status of the colonial versus the postcolonial subject shifted within the local jurisdiction and through the implementation of photo I.D.s. In Senegal the selective imposition of photo I.D.s during the colonial period shifts our understanding of photography from a tool of surveillance to an instrument documenting privilege.

The study of the arrival of photography and the relation between the colonial state and its subjects in Senegal corroborates Edward's and Strother's line of argument. In seeking to bypass a Foucauldian view of photography, which reveals mechanisms of control and yet mutes the "Other," it is essential to examine alternative models of interaction particularly in the first few decades of the history of photography. The following section seeks to demonstrate the agency of the sitter by discussing the establishment of portraiture and rendering the instability of the photographic language—even when the colonizers were behind the camera.

Itinerant photographers and local customers, 1870-1900s

> Things move very slowly in this part of the world; yet there is more activity and bustle in this little French town than in any other place of the size I have seen on the coast. There are about thirty vessels in the harbor, nearly all French, one only bearing the Stars and Stripes. Everybody speaks French and Joliff [*i.e. Wolof*] languages, and nobody speaks English. The people, with very few exceptions, are all mulattoes, or colored people […] Before I return, I wish to go by a French steamer to St. Louis, near the mouth of the Senegal River. […] The French are quite selfish. They do not allow the vessels of any other nation to ascend that magnificent river.[46]

In 1859, the African-American photographer Augustus Washington from Monrovia was travelling from Liberia across West Africa. In this excerpt from his correspondence, Washington

[45] Email to Z.S. Strother June 2010. I thank Professor Strother for sharing this correspondence and these references with me. Further references: Erika Nimis, "Mali's Photographic Memory: From Outsider Readings to National Reclaiming," *Visual Anthropology* 27, no. 4 (2014): 395; Elder, *Capturing Change: The Practice of Malian Photography, 1930s-1990s*, 171-2; Keller, "Visual Griots: Social, Political, and Cultural Histories in Mali through the Photographer's Lens," 402.

[46] I thank Ann Shumard for sharing with me the letter included above which is kept at the Library of Congress: Augustus Washington, "Letter from Aw," *New-York Colonization Journal, February 1860 From the Journal of Commerce* (1859).

gives a snapshot of 1850s Gorée, a small island located just off the coast of Dakar. Despite the size of the island, Gorée had maintained an important role in regional politics due to its strategic location off the coast. Since the fifteenth century the Portuguese, French, British and Dutch had fought for the control of the island, which was the starting point for commerce inland. By the time Washington arrived it had already been granted municipal status, and its dwellers were active in the slave trade and other economic exchanges. Washington was certainly not the only visitor who would have been surprised by the activity taking place in Gorée during its time as one of the most important entry points into the continent.

Washington's letter, recovered by Ann Shumard, suggested that the photographer was planning to visit Saint Louis as he had other African cities along the coast.[47] More recently, I found evidence regarding his work as a photographer in the French colony.[48] The *Journal Officiel du Sénégal* contains an advertisement published in 1860:

> A. Washington […] takes the liberty to inform the public that he has installed [his studio] at Mr. Martin's house, and that he does portraits-daguerreotypes. He cannot stay in Saint Louis more than a few days and will receive amateurs, from 9 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon, and children from 11 to 12. Models will be provided. The price of portraits: 10,15 and 20 francs.[49]

This advertisement is the oldest known record of a portrait photographer working in Senegal. It is crucial to emphasize that one of the earliest photographers in the colony was not a Frenchman but an African-American, who worked with the local elite showing models ("*Des modelés leur*

[47] Ann M. Shumard, "A Durable Memento: Portratis by Augustus Washington, African American Daguerrotypist," ed. National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1999).
[48] The same advertisement has been published by Hickling.
[49] "*A. Washington de Monrovia prend la liberté d'informer le public qu'il s'est installé chez M. Martin, et qu'il fait des portraits au daguerréotype. Ne devant séjourner à Saint Louis que peu de jours, il recevra les amateurs, de 9 heures du matin a 3 heures de l'après-midi et les enfants, de 11 heures a midi. Des modéles leur seront soumis. Prix des portraits: 10, 15 et 20 francs."* BnF, Feuille officielle du Senegal n. 8 mardi 21 Fevrier 1860.

seront soumis") that were certainly fashionable in the US and other Anglophone contexts.[50] While extensive research has been done on Washington's photographic practice in the United States, where he learnt and first practiced photography, no picture taken in Senegal has been identified to date.[51]

From the 1860s onwards we find more evidence of photographers working in Senegal. Archival research, and particularly the analysis of official journals published between 1856 and 1936, allowed me to track when photographers were coming in and out of the colony. It was the Governor Faidherbe who in 1856 funded the first official gazette printed by the colonial government and edited in Saint Louis.[52] The publication—which changed its title from *Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances* to *Journal du Sénégal et dépendances*—was distributed on a weekly basis and included official communications as well as news and adverts from France.

The second photographer who published his arrival in Senegal is John Parkes Decker, who came to Senegal from neighboring Gambia in 1867.[53] Besides Washington and Decker, several French photographers passed through Saint Louis, namely Decampe for whom we have archival records dating to 1861.[54] There was a photo competition in Saint Louis in 1866,

[50] Washington's practice in West Africa was itinerant—pointing to early photographers' difficulty surviving in this business solely in one location. Washington was a businessman based in Liberia and he practiced photography as he travelled for his work trips.

[51] Shawn Michelle Smith, *At the Edge of Sight: Photography and the Unseen* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Maurice O. Wallace and Smith Shawn Michelle, *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Jo Ann Webb, "From Obscurity, an African American Photographer's Life Comes into Focus," *Research Reports (Smithsonian Institution)* (1999); Marcy J. Dinius, *The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype*, 1st ed., Material Texts; Variation: Material Texts. (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[52] For further research on the beginnings of a local press see Roger Pasquier, "Les Débuts De La Presse Au Sénégal," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines,* 2, no. 7 (1962).

[53] 1867 anne 12 *Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances* (MdS) http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/175311116.html n. 564 mardi 15 Janvier 1867: "*Decker- photographe in Gorée*."
BnF. MdS, 54 n. 81 mardi 16 juillet 1861 "*Portraits a la mine de plomb imitant la photographie ressemblance garantie. S'adresse a M.A. Decampe sous-officier aux tirailleurs sénégalais."*

suggesting that photography was being practiced, and yet very few works have survived from this period.[55]

While in the 1860s, French, Gambian and African-American photographers travelled to Senegal, from the 1870s onwards it is mostly French photographers who dominate the métier.[56] Between the 1870s and the early 1900s, photographers such as Blaise/Félix Bonnevide, Louis Hostalier and the Noal brothers established solid businesses in urban areas, producing rich portfolios of portraits and landscapes printed in various formats such as cabinet prints, *cartes-de-visite* and, eventually, postcards.

Hickling was the first scholar to write extensively on Bonnevide. In his practice as a regular visitor to Senegal, Bonnevide's enterprise "followed the pattern of many small-scale, independent French businessmen." [57] The earliest reference to Bonnevide's activity in Senegal dates to 1876, when the photographer advertised his arrival in the city of Saint Louis. The French advertisement stated:

> Mr. Bonnevide, photographer, recently returned to Saint Louis has the honor to tell the public that he can do all sorts of photographs like group portraits, landscapes and reproductions in small and big format, as they are, etc. at moderate prices. He can assure the people who wish to honor him with their trust, that they will be satisfied with the execution of his work. He also informs them that because he can stay only for a short time in the colony, the people who want to be photographed, etc. should hurry. His atelier is located in rue de France home of trader Blanchard, where clients can come everyday from 7 to 10 in the morning and from 2 to 5 in the evening.[58]

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[55] A list of objects included in an exhibition in Saint Louis includes photography (BnF: MdS, N. 516 mardi 13 fevrier 1866 p 271-274); References about the Paris exposition also including photography (BnF, MdS, N 523 3 avril 1866 p. 301); reference to prizes for the expo of Saint Louis, including a prize for photography (BnF, MdS, n. 558 mardi 4 decembre 1866 p. 457).

[56] In the 1870s there is an advertisement selling daguerreotypes: BnF MdS, 1870 anne 15.

[57] Hickling, "Bonnevide: Photographie Des Colonies: Early Studio Photography in Senegal," 344.

[58] "*M. Bonnevide, photographe, nouvellement arrivé a Saint Louis, a l honneur de prévenir le public qu'il se charge de toutes sortes de photographies telles que portraits de groupes, vues et reproductions en petit ou en grand, quelles soient, etc. à des prix modérés. Il peut assurer d'avance les personnes qui voudront bien l'honorer de leur confiance qu'elles seront satisfaites de l'exécution et du fini de son travail. Il informe également que ne devant faire qu'un court séjour dans la colonie, les personnes qui voudront se faire photographier, etc. devront se hâter. Son atelier est situé rue de France maison Blanchard commerçant, ou l'on peut se présenter tous les jours de 7 heures à 10 heures du matin, et de 2 à 5 h du soir.*" (BnF, MdS, n. 1038 mardi 18 janvier 1876 p 14, JO-3038-1876. Sénégal - Moniteur du Sénégal et dépendances 1864). He then does a second advertisement on April 25 when he is leaving (BnF, MdS.

Twenty years earlier, Augustus Washington had already used periodicals to advertise his work and solicit his clients. However, from the 1880s onwards, with the increasing popularity of the *Journal Official* and the birth of other newspapers such as *Le Petit Sénégalais*, and *Le Réveil du Sénégal*, this time published by private Senegalese entrepreneurs, photographers became increasingly active in advertising their presence, aware of both the competition and the efficacy of the latest sales techniques. If photo historian Elizabeth McCauley stated that "by far the most important agent that photographers could use to sell their products was the periodical press," in case of Senegal, newspapers were the most effective medium to announce and track their arrivals and departures from the colonies of tourists, visitors and travellers.[59] Advertisements were not only important to notify potential customers that the photographer was in town, but also because the sale of the photographic portrait as a luxury good depended on the photographer's ability to establish a popular public profile.[60]

Two years after Bonnevide's 1876 advertisement, further details about the photographer's activity in the colony appear in a piece of writing by a member of the Belgian Geographic Society, Adolph Burdo, in which he recounts a memorable encounter with the so-called "Roi de Dakar" or Serigne Ndakarou, leader of a number of traditional Lebou villages on the Cap Vert peninsula:

> The king of Dakar, although considered by Europeans to be only a petty king, of no importance, is absolute monarch of his people. I did not fail to make him a visit. […] After giving him some money, I offered him four bead necklaces and some coarse calico for his wives, at which he was greatly delighted. My readers would never guess what he gave me in return. Neither palm wine, nor a charm, nor an amulet, but his portrait taken

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n. 1054 mardi 25 avril 1876 p. 70): "*M. Bonnevide, photographe, a l'honneur de prévenir le public que decant terminer ses travaux le 10 mai prochain. Il informe les personnes qui ont des cliches chez lui et qui veulent faire emmailler leurs photographies de vouloir bien l'en informer et qu'aussitôt arrive chez lui a Paris. Il les leur enverra franco parfaitement exécutées et au même prix qui les leur donne a Saint Louis. Il profite de cette circonstance pour remercier les personnes qui ont bien voulu l'honneur de leur confiance pendant son court séjour au Sénégal."*

[59] Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871*, Yale Publications in the History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 76.

[60] Ibid.

> by a real photographer, Mr. Bonnevide […] *Dakar is decidedly too civilized and I took my leave of it as soon as possible, to go in quest of more genuine savages*.[61]

Serigne Ndakarou's nonchalance in offering his portrait to a visitor who was expecting beads instead was certainly startling in 1878, and likely surprising to many of us now: yet it provides evidence that *cartes-de-visite* were a commodity for the local elite who acted as patrons of photography (fig.12).[62] Serigne Ndakarou's action demonstrates that, rather than his being frightened of photography or suspicious of sharing his portrait with a stranger, the materiality of the photograph for him turned the portrait into a novel object with resulting appeal.[63]

After 1876 Bonnevide returned to the colony with some regularity, as we find advertisements published in the *Journal Officiel du Sénégal* in 1878, 1880 and 1885.[64] His frequent trips suggest that photography was becoming increasingly popular among the foreign communities residing in Senegal and the local elite, enough to render it profitable for the French photographer.[65]

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[61] Hickling, "Bonnevide: Photographie Des Colonies: Early Studio Photography in Senegal," 339. Emphasis mine.
[62] Serigne Ndakarou's portrait circulated in a variety of formats, including publications as discussed by Hickling and also in *cartes-de-visite* sometime signed by other photographers such as Noal. This issue of the ambiguity of authorship within these commercial practices will be discussed later.
[63] Z. S. Strother, "A Terrifying Mimesis: Problems of Portraiture and Representation in African Sculpture (Congo-Kinshasa)," *RES: Journal of Anthropology and Aesthetics* 65-66, no. Spring-Autumn (2014): 19-22; 26-27.
[64] "*M.Bonnevide photographe, a l'honneur d informer le public qu'arrivant de Paris avec un nouveau procède pour la conservation des photographies, il viens d installer son atelier rue de l'Hopital, n 1. Il fera comme par le passe, tous ses efforts pour satisfaire les personnes qui voudront bien l'honorer de leur confiance et leur annoncer en même temps qui il ne restera que très peu de temps a Saint Louis.*" (BnF MdS 3038,1 janvier 1878 p. 8)
"*M. Bonnevide photographe, a l'honneur d'annoncer au public de Saint Louis, qu'il se dispose a partir par le prochain courrier. Les personnes que auraient encore l'intention de profiter de son passage dans cette Ille sont priées de faire leurs commandes le plu tôt possible. On trouvera chez lui une collection variée de vues et de types du pays*." (BnF MdS N 1151 mardi 2 fevrier 1878 p 51).
[65] In the 1870s there is also an advertisement for Muiron: *"M. Muiron, photographe, avant son départ pour Sainte Marie de Bathurst a l'honneur de remercier les personnes de la colonie qui one bien voulu lui accorder leur confiance. Saint louis, le 22 décembre 1877.*" (BnF MdS 3038 tuesday 25 december 1877 p. 278) In the 1880s there is Neville and Hautefeuille: "*M. E. Neville a l'honneur d'informer le public q'il vient d'ouvrir un atelier de photographie rue Bisson n.2 vis-à-vis le magasin de M. W. Betz" (*BnF MdS n.1257 mardi 9 mars 1880 p. 42).

Like other *petit colons* who dreamed of making a quick fortune in the colony, Bonnevide expanded his portfolio to satisfy and increase his clientele base.[66] In his 1880's advertisement a shift can be noted in the way the photographer presents himself, showcasing a growing photographic variety.

> Mr. Bonnevide, just returned to this city, informs the public that he has installed his studio in rue de la Mosquée in the house inhabited by Mrs. Magnan. Having to leave Saint Louis before the beginning of May, during the short stay that he has left he will take photographs in all genres, groups, landscapes, reproductions of portraits of every dimension, including life size, and he will not neglect anything so that all the jobs that will be given to him will be executed to each customer's satisfaction. *One will also find in his studio a varied collection of black types* and views of Senegal.[67]

Differently from his previous advertisement, Bonnevide here mentions a collection of "black types" and views of Senegal. These additions suggest a change in Bonnevide's audience, that came to include French customers living in Senegal, visitors passing through Dakar—which by then had a well-developed tourist trade—and French compatriots who would have seen his works on the occasion of the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.[68] Unlike other photographers and administrators like Edmond Noirot,[69] whose objective was that of documenting the colony and whose work was popular in official circles, Bonnevide's photographs were sold informally and on a commercial basis in Senegal and France. Technical breakthroughs in the 1880s, including the development of the dry-plate process and smaller lightweight cameras, facilitated

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[66] On *petit colon* see G. Wesley Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal; the Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900-1920* (Stanford, Calif.: Published for the Hoover Institution by Stanford University Press, 1971), 74.

[67] "*M. Bonnevide photographe de retour en cette ville informe le public qu'il vient d'installer son atelier rue de la Mosquée dans la maison qu'habitait Mme. Magnan. Devant quitter Saint Louis au commencement du mois de mai, il fera durant le court espace de temps qui lui reste, des photographies de tous genres, groupes, paysages, reproductions portraits de toutes dimensions jusqu'aux grandeurs naturelles et ne négligera rien pou que les travaux qui lui seront confiés soient exécutés à la satisfaction de chacun. On trouvera aussi chez lui une collection variée de types de noirs du pays et de vues du Sénégal*." BnF MdS N 1261 mardi 6 avril 1880 p 56

[68] Hickling, "Bonnevide: Photographie Des Colonies: Early Studio Photography in Senegal," 344.

[69] In the 1890s many more photographers, including Hostalier and the Noal Brothers, started to enter the business, the latter working for *Le Monde Illustre.* There were also a number of photographers who arrived in the colony as part of their military endeavors and photographed it. Noirot, for instance, was hardly involved with local patrons. David, *Ernest Noirot (1851-1913): Un Administrateur Colonial Hors Normes*; Gwenaëlle Trolez, *L'explorateur, Le Photographe Et Le Missionaire* (Paris: Magellan & Cie, 2007), 81.

Bonnevide's work producing images in a variety of genres and formats.[70] By then photographic equipment had become more portable, facilitating photographers' travel across the region.

Paysages et types des mœurs du Sénégal is an example of a photo album collecting *cartes-de-visite* produced by Bonnevide that was then given as a gift to Émile Delor, a trader working in Senegal in the mid-1880s.[71] The collection includes 145 portraits of various subjects: notables and chiefs from Senegal and neighboring countries, women and men from rural villages, and middle-class sitters. In the album (fig.1.3) each page displays four portraits with hand-written captions identifying the sitters. The organization of the album, with its labels categorizing its subjects, deindividualized the sitters by reducing them to types. This format echoes the articulations of racial typification that accompanied studies of human biological evolution, a major concern of anthropology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

But what if Serigne Ndakarou's portrait was included in this series too? Hickling discovered that Serigne Ndakarou's *carte-de-visite* did not remain solely in his hands, but that it circulated widely in France via anthropological publications. This occurrence was far from rare.

The Delor album includes a *carte-de-visite* (fig.1.4) with the portrait of a woman printed directly on the mount. The photographer, Bonnevide, captures her in his studio in a frontal pose as she sits on a chair, her arm resting on a side table that is lavishly covered by a velvet textile. The sitter is wearing a long embroidered *boubou* covering a striped *pagne*, worn as a skirt, a cylindrical headscarf—in Wolof *jeere pof*—and a third textile resting on her lap. The precious textiles matched by her delicate parure, which includes rings, bracelets, earrings, necklace and choker made with gold filigree balls, present her as an elegant and sophisticated woman.

[70] Geary, *Images from Bamum: German Colonial Photography in Cameroon*, 26.
[71] Hickling, "Bonnevide: Photographie Des Colonies: Early Studio Photography in Senegal," 347.

The Delor collection includes other portraits of members of the Senegalese elite. Another female sitter adopts a similar pose with her head slightly tilted to her right (fig.1.5). Sitting, she also rests her arm on the same table. The combination of her clenched fist and her drifting gaze however conveys her uneasiness in front of the camera. While her textiles and jewelry are less abundant than in the previous image, both portraits present finely dressed Wolof women, who probably commissioned these photographs, which eventually were included in Delor's album. Within this transition from private consumption to public spectacle, their *cartes-de-visite's* significance changed from symbolizing their modernity in their private circles, to indexing their exoticism and Otherness.[72]

The different circumstances of production and circulation of these images in France and Senegal suggests an asymmetry in the understanding of the photograph itself. Within Delor's album, the portraits were reproduced for the purposes of physiognomic typology. Their private dimension was largely ignored, and instead the photos' evidentiary value was privileged. This slippage in perception, a point to which I will return later on, is essential to differentiate understandings of photography—particularly in relation to the medium's indexical quality and modernity.

Replicas, likeness and the *originaires*

Photo historians have written extensively on the formulaic nature of commercial portraiture.[73] Batchen writes: "repetitive and predictable, popular and unabashedly commercial, these small pictures have been denigrated as 'mechanical and routine' by photography's

[72] Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Likenesses: Portrait Photography in Europe, 1850-1870; Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, November 14, 1980-January 11, 1981* (Albuquerque: The Museum, 1980), 4.
[73] *Cartes-de-visite* were initially produced for the elite. Only in a secondary phase were they adapted and adopted by the lower classes. In both cases their primary scope was that of cheaply and quickly capturing likeness. *A.A. Disderi and the Carte-De-Visite Portrait Photograph* 27.

historians."[74] He continues that as *cartes-de-visite* often echo the iconography of high art ("the tumbling curtain, the classical column, the receding landscape"), they embody "the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie and its systems of social and economic life."[75] Batchen, whose larger academic contributions push the boundaries of photography beyond formalist approaches exclusive to Western tastes and histories, acknowledges the possibilities of having alternative understandings of this genre outside of Europe and the US. "What, for example are we to make of *cartes* taken in Africa, India, Japan, or New Zealand?" he asks.[76] Batchen maintains that photographic material from the "old country" becomes a reference point to those living in the colony, contributing to a process whereby everyday life in the periphery of the empire mimics and constantly refers to that of the motherland.[77] In the following section I wish to reverse this process. Rather than seeing these portraits as mimicking European customs, I seek to identify the formal lexicon that point to the Saint Louisians as their own audience.

Exquisitely dressed from head to toe, a woman is posing in a photographic studio while holding an infant (fig.1.6). The rigid posture and studio decor echo well-established conventions of early French portrait photography: as in any Parisian studio, it faithfully reproduces upper

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[74] Geoffrey Batchen, "Dreams of Ordinary Life: Cartes-De-Visite and the Bourgeois Imagination," in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, ed. J. J. Long and Edward Welch (2008), 80.

[75] According to Walter Benjamin, the flowering of photography was in its first decade that preceded the industrialization of the visiting card picture. Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Walter Benjamin, et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 507. As Batchen argues, photography is not the product of "some isolated individual genius," but rather the result of Western culture, linked with the capitalist cult of consumption. Batchen presents the *cartes-de-visite* within an understanding of Marx's process of commodification within which "a commodity is a product made by a person that is exchanged for money so that another person can use or consume it." Batchen, "Dreams of Ordinary Life: Cartes-De-Visite and the Bourgeois Imagination," 86. As a consequence, social relations are subsumed by the logic of the market, and often the commodity assumes power over people. "Within the self-perpetuating logic of commodity fetishism, consumption, as we all know, offers a comforting, if short-lived, experience of power and control … to search for the 'real' subject, the inner man or woman, or to lament the absence of self-expression or overt individuality, is therefore to misunderstand the nature of *carte-de-visite* photography, which is all about the semiotics of typology and the sublimation of the individual to the mass" ibid., 87-88.

[76] "Dreams of Ordinary Life: Cartes-De-Visite and the Bourgeois Imagination," 96.

[77] Ibid.

middle class interiors with a lightly painted backdrop, elegant table, and vases with freshly cut flowers. Those signs appear as referents to the customs of the aristocracy, or as Batchen terms them, "hollow signifiers of a cultural economy now dead and gone, or at least safely commodified."[78] Yet, are those the only referents that identify and qualify the sitter? Are these emptied signs the *only* points of entry to this portrait?

Richard Brilliant defines portraits as "artworks made to represent living or once living beings by means of particularized identifiable images." In order to do so, the image needs to "bear some specific relationship to the person portrayed."[79] While portraiture as a genre includes a wide range of images that employ various formal strategies, from abstraction to hyperrealism, in the West portraiture is often conflated with naturalism.[80] Early photographic portraits, in particular, were praised precisely when the sitter's identity filtered recognizably through the image.

Early daguerreotypes were often deemed as on the one hand "*trop ressemblant*"—in preserving every wrinkle—and on the other deficient, unable to capture "the 'impression' of the personality."[81] Only by his ability to "analyze the mind and motions of his sitters" and render them on a two-dimensional surface could the painter or the photographer aspire to rank with poets and historians—that is, with artists rather than with artisans.[82] The portraitist then had to serve the additional function of psychologist, seeking moral rather than physical likeness: "photographers agreed that the success of their portraits depended on the maneuvers of the mind

[78] Ibid., 86.
[79] Jean Borgatti, Richard Brilliant, and Allen Wardwell, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World* (New York: Center for African Art, 1990), 12.
[80] As the scholar Clark Hulse has noted, definitions such as that provided by Brilliant are "so historically determinate and so riddled with fallacies that the inquiry [on the genre of portraiture] must inevitably return to and consume its own point of origin." Clark Hulse, "Review," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 2 (1993): 327.
[81] McCauley, *Likenesses: Portrait Photography in Europe, 1850-1870; Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, November 14, 1980-January 11, 1981*, 2.
[82] Ibid.

behind the ground glass more than the perfection of their instruments and chemicals."[83] Their social position as "artists" rather than "technicians" depended on this insistent interpretation of likeness as a moral more than physical resemblance.

In order to achieve this likeness—that is, to render the sitter's psychological landscape—the best poses were inevitably the most natural. In 1854, the French photographic critic Ernest Lacan wrote: "*on ne compose pas un portrait … on doit laisser à la personne représentée la pose qui lui est habituelle, et qui concourt à la faire reconnaître aussi bien que ses traits ou sa taille*."[84] This tension encapsulates the paradox of photographic portraiture, whereby the photographer seeks naturalness through artifice, likeness through *mise-en-scène*—physical accuracy a lesser priority.

In European and American art history the portrait, and in particular the photographic portrait, is often conflated with the formation and establishment of bourgeois individuality.[85] Rooted in Renaissance philosophic and aesthetic principles, portraiture articulated images of bourgeois individualities that expressed this group's economic emancipation and inner self.[86] While the aristocratic identity is generally hereditary or socially and politically determined, the bourgeois subject is according to art historian Joanna Woodall "inherently autonomous, interior, self-conscious, active and unique" and portraiture played a crucial role in crystallizing and

[83] *A.A. Disderi and the Carte-De-Visite Portrait Photograph* 12; 41.
[84] Ernest Lacan quoted in: *Likenesses: Portrait Photography in Europe, 1850-1870; Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, November 14, 1980-January 11, 1981*, 4.
[85] Strother, "A Terrifying Mimesis: Problems of Portraiture and Representation in African Sculpture (Congo-Kinshasa)," 135; Ernst Van Alphen, "The Portrait's Dispersal: Concepts of Representation and Subjectivity in Contemporary Portraiture," in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 239; Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Residual Resemblance: Three Notes on the Ends of Portraiture," in *Face-Off: The Portrait in Recent Art*, ed. Melissa E. Feldman (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 59.
[86] Eventually, as art historian Joanna Woodall maintains "individuality ultimately remains a natural, objective attribute of the bourgeoisie." Joanna Woodall, ed. *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, Critical Introductions to Art (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 15.

visualizing these ideals.[87] Eventually it was photography that, following its popularization through the invention of the *carte-de-visite*, extended the privileges embedded in the portrait previously restricted to the higher classes, to the petit-bourgeoisie and middle class who could finally afford to buy their own likenesses.[88]

In the study of traditional African art, scholars, with only few important exceptions, have tended to resist interpretations of these art forms as portraits.[89] At least since the early 1990s, art historians such as Jean Borgatti, Alisa LaGamma and Z. S. Strother have demonstrated that regardless of how abstract African artworks may appear, they often *are* embedded in the art of portraiture.[90] Funerary and commemorative works for instance were created to depict specific historical individuals. Likeness in sculpture was not necessarily achieved through physiognomic realism, which was often disfavored as disrespectful or even insulting, but more often by rendering the subject's social identity using emblems and symbols that would be apparent to members of the community, but less so to the uninitiated.[91]

While art in Africa has then been largely understood in diametric opposition to the ideals of individuality associated with the rise of Western modernity and bourgeoisie, this literature has

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[87] Ibid. As discussed by Ernst Van Alphen *inter alia*, the originality and uniqueness of the bourgeois subjectivity is challenged by postmodern artists in the West such as Cindy Sherman. Van Alphen, "The Portrait's Dispersal: Concepts of Representation and Subjectivity in Contemporary Portraiture," 242-3.

[88] On the industrialization of photography see: McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871*. On a critique of the industrialization of photography see: Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," 274. On *carte-de-visite*: McCauley, *A.A. Disderi and the Carte-De-Visite Portrait Photograph*

[89] Some of the earliest exceptions include Carl Einstein's 1922 *La sculpture africaine*, and Jean Laude's 1965 article "Problèmes du portrait: images funéraires et images royales." For a discussion on this see: Strother, "A Terrifying Mimesis: Problems of Portraiture and Representation in African Sculpture (Congo-Kinshasa)," 135.

[90] Alisa LaGamma, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York N.Y.), and Museum Rietberg, *Heroic Africans: Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures* (New York; New Haven Conn.: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011); Borgatti, Brilliant, and Wardwell, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*; Strother, "A Terrifying Mimesis: Problems of Portraiture and Representation in African Sculpture (Congo-Kinshasa)."

[91] If Borgatti talks about realism in general terms, Strother expands the discussion by differentiating two- from three-dimensional portraits: three-dimensional sculptures that had physiognomic resemblance were understood among the Pende "as a tool for political mystification," whereas naturalism in itself "accomplishes nothing" Borgatti, Brilliant, and Wardwell, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, 31; Strother, "A Terrifying Mimesis: Problems of Portraiture and Representation in African Sculpture (Congo-Kinshasa)," 27.

demonstrated that in many West African countries, photography did not introduce the genre of portraiture.[92] We should therefore build on these findings to address the impact of other media such as photography in the construction and visualization of the self. For instance, if in her studies Borgatti maintains that in traditional African art, portraiture "emphasizes social rather than personal identity," it is difficult to image that photography did not engender and capture shifting perceptions and representations of one's individual identity.[93] We may wonder, what happened when photography, rather than sculpture was employed to produce a portrait?

Let us return to the previously discussed portrait (fig.1.6). In contrast to the setting which is reminiscent of any French photographic studio, upon closer inspection the woman's body language and dress code strike one as belonging to and addressing another elite: that of Saint Louis. The woman's outstretched hand calls the viewer's attention to her long fingers, a sign of beauty. The long fingers resting on her lap accentuate her legs spreading. While this posture would have been considered inappropriate elsewhere, in this case it allows her to display her precious indigo *pagne* (textile). The variety of white motifs on the dark textile is produced through a time-consuming technique that involves stitching, dying, and then removing the stiches to reveal white geometric motifs against the dark blue background. The technique, called stitch-resist, as well as the design are typical of Saint Louis and identify the sitter as an *originaire*.

While the portraits discussed in the previous section were printed to circulate as small *cartes-de-visite,* this photograph is one of five portraits that I was able to find during my research that were mounted on cabinet card. By the 1860s, *cartes-de-visite* had reached the middle and lower classes in Europe and cabinet prints became the new luxury item.[94] Popular through the

[92] On the tension between individual and social identity see also: Keller, "Visual Griots: Social, Political, and Cultural Histories in Mali through the Photographer's Lens," 214.
[93] Borgatti, Brilliant, and Wardwell, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, 73.
[94] McCauley, *A.A. Disderi and the Carte-De-Visite Portrait Photograph* 1.

1900s, cabinet prints were commercially produced portraits mounted on larger card stock, often with the studio name embossed in the corner. Frequently sold as collectors' items, these cards contained images of attractive women or members of various royal families. While in this case the sitter and photographer are unidentified, this cabinet card was probably produced in one of Saint Louis's studios between the 1880s and the 1900s.

In contrast to the frontal compositions and close framing favored by Bonnevide, the cabinet print presents a three-quarter view within a spacious studio backdrop. In this minimal rotation, the viewer's perception changes dramatically. The frontal shot against plain backdrop of the *carte-de-visite* flattens the sitter's psychological depth. In the cabinet print, the three-quarter view provides a literal suggestion of volume and psychological substance in the sitter. In this composition the sitter can display her outfit in its totality—particularly her shoes and the jewelry around her ankles. Rather than resting her arm on the side table, the woman is holding her infant, who seems the fulcrum of the portrait, characterizing her as a mother. The regality of her pose and the sobriety of her gaze add gravity to her presence.

Richard Brilliant argues that "most portraits exhibit a formal stillness, a heightened degree of self-composure that responds to the formality of the portrait making situation."[95] The subject presents him- or herself to indicate "the solemnity of the occasion and the timelessness of the portrait image."[96] If the sitter belongs to the higher elite, she will "bear the gravamen of their 'exemplary' public roles; they offer up images of serious men and women, worthy of respect, persons who should be taken equally seriously by the viewing audience."[97] In this specific case however, moral notions of sobriety and temperance are also tied to local social codes. The composition, as well as the sitter's posture, particularly in the definition of her gestures—with

[95] Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 10.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

her hands on her knees, feet pointing outwards, and eyes slightly lowered—manifest some of the ideals of femininity in Senegal.

The self-composure of a woman of exemplary morality underscores her integrity, or *sutura*. In Wolof *sutura* refers to a code of honor that distinguishes higher from lower classes; subjects who are virtuous from those who live in a state of dishonor or shame. *Sutura* indexes a series of practices such as discretion, modesty, and privacy, which generally define the ideal feminine attitude.[98] In this portrait, the sitter expresses *sutura* as she is taking care of her child, covering her body with elegant fabrics, and looking at the viewer with self-confidence. Her diverging feet, well-grounded on the floor, the hands weighing on her knees, and the voluminous mass of her clothing, expanding her body create a pyramidal composition, accentuating this sense of gravitas that enhances her physical presence and moral composure.

If we return to Borgatti's argument, this cabinet print partly confirms her interpretation of African portraits as concerned with the expression of the sitter's social profile rather than individual idiosyncrasies. This photograph embodies Senegalese values and virtues, which here are expressed through the sitter's gestures, which re-emerge in other portraits from the same period. The sitter is not interested in advancing her unique identity—that is an individuality that makes her stand out—rather she seeks to embody ideals that her social circle values and to which they all aspire.[99] And yet, Borgatti's insistence that "the notion of personhood reflects the ontological priority of social relationships rather than personal identity" is questionable with regard to photo portraiture.[100]

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[98] Ivy Mills, "Sutura: Gendered Honor, Social Death, and the Politics of Exposure in Senegalese Literature and Popular Culture" (UC Berkeley, 2011), 2-3.
[99] Also Stephen Sprague argues that photos reflect commonly shared values. Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," 8. For identity and portraiture in traditional African art see also: David Doris, "Symptoms and Strangeness in Yoruba Anti-Aesthetics," *African arts* (2005): 25-6.
[100] Borgatti, Brilliant, and Wardwell, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*, 30.

While performing ideals of *sutura* by participating in the production, consumption and circulation of her own portrait, the sitter's specific agency and individuality cannot be disregarded. By posing in front of the camera in one of the, at that time, rare studios in Saint Louis, the woman affirms herself as a patron and consumer of photography and therefore claims a "modern" identity—a dimension that is not included in the conventional definition of *sutura,* but is a feature that would have been apparent to any relative or friend who would have seen this portrait. She could afford the latest technology; it is not about her family or ethnic group, it is about her. The sitter's prestigious lineage is enunciated by her demeanor and further confirmed by her status as a patron of photography. The technological procedure itself qualifies her as a modern subject, and in this sense, photography can be understood as reflecting and advancing new conceptions of personhood and individuality compared to other media.[101]

Incidentally, as the first Senegalese sitters were posing in photographic studios in Saint Louis, their legal status within *La Grande France* was changing. France was launching its politics of assimilation through the offering of French citizenship and the imposition of the French Civil Code; the *originaires* relentlessly negotiated the first and resisted the latter.[102] While the *originaires* eventually secured their political rights, often their civil rights—as Muslim–remained insufficient. The civil and civic status of the *originaires* triggered a prolonged

[101] I will return to this relation between modernity and photography in Chapter Four.
[102] Diouf explains that, in the 1830s, the Muslims of Saint Louis were sending regular petitions demanding that a Muslim court be established in the colony. In 1857 Louis Faidherbe created a Muslim court, whereby Muslim autonomy in matters of family law was officially acknowledged. Also, following the Algerian model, Faidherbe allowed the institutions of *médersa*, that is, religious schools that combined the teaching of Islam side by side with those of the French. In the 1910s, following the election of the first Black Senegalese representative to the French National Assembly, Blaise Diagne, he managed to secure legal recognition of the *originaires*' citizenship through a series of laws. In the 1930s, a decree recognized the exclusive competence of Muslim courts in the civil affairs of Muslim natives and their descendants, such as marriage, inheritance, gifts, wills and so on. Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," 689-93.

conflict between the colonial magistrates and the colonial administration.[103] The battle was fierce: at stake was not just the universality of the French Civil Code, but also the crucial relationship between the colony and the *métropole*. A decree finally recognized the exclusive competence of Muslim courts in the civil affairs of Muslim natives and their descendants—such as marriage and inheritance—only in the 1930s. But how could the motherland reconcile the fact that polygamy was illegal according to the French law, but was accepted for the *originaires*? The *originaires* fought in the political arena by exercising their right to vote and in the economic realm by occupying leading positions in commerce while maintaining adherence to their cultural and social codes.[104]

While it has often been argued that the special status of the *originaires* compromised their African identity as they assimilated to the dominant French cultural, social and legal codes, Mamadou Diouf has argued that the opposite was the case: the role of the *originaires* should be seen as a crucial part of the resistance to the colonial enterprise.[105] Eventually, precisely through this extended negotiation and hybridization, the *originaires* were able to develop a unique indigenous culture.[106] To use Diouf's words:

> Assimilation as a policy did not reduce the areas of innovation and creativity available to the colonized. On the contrary, in the colonial experience that most fervently emphasized the cultural side of the civilizing mission and the colonial enterprise, people possessed and indeed exploited possibilities for hybridizing and selecting modes of acculturation. Here 'acculturation' means the recreation of a culture and a society in the context of the colonial experience, an original production built on the continual reorganization of precolonial and colonial experiences.[107]

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[103] Ibid., 675.
[104] The status of the *originaires* within the French Empire was unique in West Africa but not across the African continent. Algerians for instance were allowed to employ Muslim justice while being part of the French system. The *originaires* were greatly inspired by the Algerian model when shaping and advancing their requests. Ibid., 687.
[105] Other scholars studying the African elite advance a similar argument, see: Philip S. Zachernuck, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charolettesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).
[106] Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," 692; Johnson, "The Senegalese Urban Elite, 1900-1945."
[107] Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," 676.

Their success in maintaining their Muslim and Wolof cultural traits, many of which are apparent in the medium of the cabinet card, demonstrates the *originaires*' overall success in resisting colonial cultural domination.[108] To a certain degree, it could be argued that photography was instrumental in shaping the identity of the *originaires,* in their distinct social and cultural codes. Let's return to Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch's quote that describes the *habitants* as a community that distinguish themselves "for their lifestyle, their cuisine, their way of walking, wearing perfume, their conception of beauty and soon a juridical specificity, in short the creation of an urban space of civility."[109]

In the broader field of the history of photography, scholars have often lamented the formulaic nature of early portraiture, in which certain poses and attires are replicated infinitely with small variations. In dealing with non-Western early photographic portraiture, scholars such as Batchen were even more resistant to interpreting them as "original," as they are seen mimicking customs from a distant motherland.[110] Within this framework, early non-Western photographic portraiture is interpreted as essentially "derivative" of European photographic conventions. In studying photographic portraiture Tobias Wendl argues, "it would take some decades, approximately until the late 1940s and the early 1950s, before we witness signs of 'Africanization' and finally the emergence of truly original photographic practices and imagery."[111] In many cases, those signs that we deem "derivative" are the only ones that seem familiar or legible to us. The close study of early photographic practices in Senegal allows us to instead understand these portraits' complexity, and to see this photography as the product of

[108] Johnson, "The Senegalese Urban Elite, 1900-1945," 185.
[109] Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial," 288.
[110] Batchen, "Dreams of Ordinary Life: Cartes-De-Visite and the Bourgeois Imagination," 96.
[111] Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," 81.

hybridization from its inception. In the case of Senegal, there were no early Senegalese photographers, but there were early Senegalese patrons such as the Roi de Dakar or the *originaires*, and the medium had a currency among the local elite as early as the 1880s. The value of these portraits did not necessarily coincide with Western codes and desires such as psychological likeness; rather, it was derived from a combination of social codes such as *sutura,* new civil status and political emancipation.

The era of postcards: on the instability of authorship and medium specificity (1900-20s)

In the 1900s in Senegal *cartes-de-visite* were no longer the most popular photographic commodity; postcards were. Postcards are images that are designed to travel: they are inexpensive, mobile and multiple. From 1900 to 1960 the total production of postcards in West Africa reached almost 9,000 unique images.[112] Philippe David argues that in the first period of their use, running from 1900 to 1918, at least 7200 new series were created.[113] In Senegal alone there were more than two dozens postcard producers active before 1914.[114]

Until the 1990s, however, postcards have rarely been studied. Regarded as cheap commodities derived from mass popular culture, they resisted association with the qualities associated with high art—at least before the advent of postmodernism—such as authorship and originality. Their production involves different steps and "authors"—the photographer who takes the picture, the editor who selects the images, the printer or factory that produces the actual

[112] Philippe David, "La Carte Postale Sénégalaise De 1900 À 1960," *Notes africaines. Dakar* 157 (1978): 4; "La Carte Postale Africaine (1900-1960)," *Revue juridique et politique, independance et cooperation* 40, no. 1-2 (1986): 168.
[113] "La Carte Postale Sénégalaise De 1900 À 1960," 4; "La Carte Postale Africaine (1900-1960)," 168.
[114] Postcards are the result of a complex procedure that involves many professionals—the photographer, the editor and the printer—that sometime coincide and sometimes they do not. In many cases the postcards themselves do not identify the authors of these three steps. Typically the postcards that circulated in Senegal were printed in France. In Senegal there were dozens of photographers whose works circulated in the form of postcards. Edmond Fortier was certainly the most popular.

object, and the publisher who distributes them. In a few cases these figures coincide; sometimes only the editor is credited rather than the photographer; often the same image appears in various series, associated with different photographers.[115] The ambiguous multiplicity of the "authors" involved in the production of postcards parallels the promiscuity of the postcard as an object. Postcards, as essentially commercial goods, work precisely because they are reproduced in hundreds or thousands of iterations and feature repetitive motifs—as opposed to unique images.[116] The name of the photographer, or, for that matter, of the sitter, is a secondary value to the goal of commercial profit. The apparent lack of artistic intentionality, provenance and value has prevented art historians, in particular, from paying close attention to this genre.

In academic literature, postcards are often interpreted as vivid expressions of Westerners' desire for the exotic. Within this tension between the object's physical distance and a souvenir's intimacy and closeness, the owner is overwhelmed by nostalgia for the original object. To use Susan Stewart's words: "the souvenir seeks distance (the exotic in time and space), but it does so in order to transform and collapse distance into proximity to, or approximation with, the self."[117] Within the Western imagination, the postcard reaffirmed notions of alterity as a way to define and justify its 'civilizing mission' in the colony. This was achieved by postcards' documenting the colony with landscape views of villages and urban spaces, events marking the social and political life of the colony, and portraits of typified subjects. Within this frame, the postcard industry to a large extent served and supported the agenda of the colonial powers.

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[115] Christaud M. Geary, "Different Visions? Postcards from Africa by European and African Photographers and Sponsors," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*, ed. Christaud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb (Washington, D.C.: Washington, D.C., 1998), 2.
[116] Prochaska, "Fantasia of the Photothéque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal," 40-43; Vokes, "Reflections on a Complex (and Cosmopolitan) Archive: Postcards and Photography in Early Colonial Uganda, C.1904—1928," 380; Geary, "Different Visions? Postcards from Africa by European and African Photographers and Sponsors," 150.
[117] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 1st paperback ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xii, 136.St xii; 136.

François-Edmond Fortier (1862-1928) is regarded as the most prolific photographer who worked across French West Africa between 1900 and 1912.[118] He is mostly known for his successful production of postcards, which reached 3300 photographs according to Hickling, and 5000 negatives according to David; he continued to re-issue and re-print them until the early 1920s.[119] During this time, Fortier built a unique business. In contrast to his colleagues, he chose Dakar rather than the old Saint Louis as his headquarters, where he established a small shop to sell his postcards. These seemed designed to appeal almost exclusively to the foreign community there, featuring an abundance of bare-breasted women performing daily scenes in villages and in the city; images that he captured during his trips across West Africa. Building on his ethnographic interests, Fortier documented life in the colony. His works were popular in French West Africa among Europeans living in the colony and in France. Among his collectors was Pablo Picasso, who owned several of his postcards featuring bare-breasted subjects and used them for some of his sketches.[120]

Recent research has complicated the proposed scenario according to which all postcards were tailored for foreign consumption and monopolized by European entrepreneurs. Contrary to popular belief, scholars have pointed out that many among these postcard editors and photographers were in fact Africans of varied backgrounds, as in the case of the Lisk Carew Brothers, who were Creole photographers working in Sierra Leone and whose postcard collection is well known.[121] These entrepreneurs produced portfolios that included a large variety

[118] Hickling, "The Early Photographs of Edmond Fortier: Documenting Postcards from Senegal," 37.
[119] Ibid.; Philippe David, *Inventaire Général Des Cartes Postales Fortier Deusieme Partie: Séries Collection Fortier (Cf) Et Collection Général Fortier (Cgf) (Sénégal, Mauritanie, Guinée, Soudan, Cote D'ivoire, Dahomey, Lagos 1906-1910)* (Saint-Julien-du-Sault: Fstier, 1987).
[120] Carlo Ginzburg, *Rapporti Di Forza: Storia, Retorica, Prova*, 1st ed., Campi Del Sapere, Culture, Variation (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2000), 134.
[121] On the only specific research on the relation between the Lisk Carew brothers and their local sitters see: Nanina Guyer, "Picturing Secrecy? The Visualization of ‘‘Secret Societies’’ in Historical Photographs from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cameroon," *Visual Anthropology* (2014). On the interaction between African photographers and their

of photographic formats and styles to satisfy their diverse clientele and competed with their European rivals such as Fortier, Benyoumoff and Albaret.

I have not been able to identify local photographers who worked in the postcard business in Senegal. Nonetheless, Demba N'Diaye, whose name is certainly Senegalese, was editing postcards in Gabon together with the photographer Khalilou in the 1900s.[122] The importance of these findings does not lie so much in establishing an authentic versus a foreign practice of photography; rather they render the complexity of this medium and métier. If with the *cartes-de-visite* we addressed the ambiguity of the portrait of the King of Dakar as his unsuspecting image moved between the private and public realms, with postcards this promiscuity is amplified, disrupting the equation between postcard production and ethnographic typification.

Between the 1890s and the 1920s, portraiture proliferated, no longer just in the forms of *cartes-de-visite* and cabinet prints, but also as postcards. Among these portraits many are typified, but a small percentage reveal something more idiosyncratic. A postcard from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's AAOA collection shows two women posing symmetrically with a young boy standing behind them (fig.1.7). The women, who are labeled as "wives of a Wolof merchant," present themselves using very similar conventions to the previous images: the hands resting on the knees; the Moroccan *babouches* pointing in opposite directions to display the patterns of the embroidered *pagne*, with its typically Saint Louisian motifs. Closely framed, the sitters fill the picture plane. Rather than striving to reenact the theatrical poses popular in the works of French photographers such as Nadar or André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri, in this portrait—as the others—the sitters' pose eliminates all semblance of motion, privileging their statuary presence.

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audience see: Z.S. Strother, ""A Photograph Steals the Soul:" the History of an Idea," in *Portraiture and Photography in Africa*, ed. John Peffer and Elisabeth Lynn Cameron (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2013), 191-3.

[122] David, "La Carte Postale Africaine (1900-1960)," 173.

Besides the identification of the sitter's ethnic group (Wolof) and apparent location (Soudan),[123] the postcard's label does not provide any information about the photographer or the editor. Nevertheless, I found at least three other postcards featuring the same backdrop and studio décor. In one, a single female sitter is posed on the same sofa (fig.1.8); like a jigsaw, the wider angle allows us to see more missing pieces of the backdrop, revealing the painted trunks and leaves of palm trees. In the second postcard (fig.1.9), a man is standing while playing the Kora. His pose and the photographer's angle finally unveil the whole of the painted scenery: round houses punctuate the vista, revealing a Senegalese village in the distance, hidden among the palm trees. In contrast to the previous two portraits, the photographer carefully orchestrates the *mise-en-scène*: the *griot*, or historian, who is the guardian of noble families' histories and lineages walks by the village and the viewer has the impression of seeing him *in medias res*.

Besides the difference in materiality—from *cartes-de-visite* to cabinet card to postcard—these three *cartes postales* differ in their inclusion of a painted backdrop. The introduction of the backdrop revolutionized the photographer's practice, as it established a new form of itinerancy. Finally, photographers were not constrained within the perimeter of their studios when photographing clients. Travelling with a painted backdrop, they could expand their practice by reaching their sitters where they were. These postcards were then probably taken outside the studio for better light, as the photographer travelled with his camera and a rolled backdrop across the region.

Like captions, backdrops also contribute to the typification of the sitter. Far from acting as passive props, their role in fashioning the subject's identity and revealing the photographer's gaze cannot be understated. In studying English photography, historian Steve Edwards maintains

[123] In this case the term Soudan refers to French Soudan, a French colonial territory in the federation of French West Africa. French Soudan corresponds roughly to today's Mali.

"the background had to blend seamlessly with the sitter in order to suggest a coherent pictorial illusion. When it did not, when the joints became visible, the background called attention to the ideological space of the studio and brought forth resentment."[124] In guaranteeing that every subject would be depicted in their appropriate setting, the background provided the substance of the image: "it cast its long shadow over the sitter, absorbing her or him into the space of its dreams."[125]

In the case of the Kora player, the photographer is capitalizing on the narrative possibilities of this background's particular scenery: the man's profile view, with his left foot in front of his right, suggests movement, as if he were playing his instrument while walking across his native village. No longer facing the camera, the sitter's theatricality, enhanced by the presence of the backdrop, tells us more about the mythical figure of the *griot* than the individuality of the sitter.

Paradoxically, as pointed out by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, backdrops also have the power to unsettle the photograph's documentary authority.[126] The backdrop at once frames the sitter, providing "evidence" for his identity, and yet fails to accomplish this hyperrealism, as its fictive nature cannot be concealed.[127] Similarly to the photograph itself, whose meaning oscillates between realism and artificiality, the backdrop may function as an evidentiary tool or a revelatory device that exposes the magician's trick. The backdrop, which is supposed to reinforce the photograph's reality, in fact disrupts its coherence and integrity.

In studying English journals from the 1860s, Steve Edwards found evidence that at that time too, the contradictions of the backgrounds—which often acquired the tone of the

[124] Steve Edwards, *The Making of English Photography: Allegories* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 251.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Appadurai, "The Colonial Backdrop - Photography."
[127] Appadurai writes that the backdrop resists, subverts or parodies the realist claims of photography. Ibid., 3.

grotesque—did not go unnoticed. He concludes that they were never meant to confuse or fool the viewer. Instead, photographers' reluctance to do away with this prop reveals, according to the scholar, their urge to turn photographs into pictures. In the case of Senegal, Hostalier as well as Benyoumoff (fig.1.10) and Albaret (fig.1.11) were rather consistent in using backdrops for their portraits of local sitters, who posed in front of idyllic African villages, natural landscapes and abstract architectural patterns. Particularly in the case of elegant sitters, such as Hostalier's portrait of the wives of the Wolof merchant (fig.1.7), the painted village does not blend seamlessly. While the Kora player is complicit in creating the exotic vignette, the Wolof wives, sitting on a sofa, foreground their statuary presence against which the idyllic village is extraneous.[128]

This image of the Kora player must have been particularly popular, as it can be found in various postcard series and formats with different labels and attributions. In one version (fig.1.12), the editors are identified as the "Metharam Bros. et Cie. Dakar." While it is difficult to ascertain the identity of these editors, their name suggests an Indian origin. In the mid-nineteenth century it was not uncommon to find Indians who had travelled and re-located to West Africa, mostly in the Gold Coast. While their role was probably limited to the distribution rather than production of postcards, this attribution provides evidence that these images were circulating throughout the region and possibly across the Anglophone/Francophone divide. This postcard is then just one instance of the complex process of image circulation, production and consumption in the continent.

[128] As a further confirmation, in her publication historian Hilary Jones includes a formal portrait from the ANS of the *métis* Justin Devés, who also posed in front of Hostalier's same painted backdrop. This portrait provides a further confirmation that Hostalier was producing portraits of the elite, who all posed – Wolof elite and *métis* – in front of the same backdrop. Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa*, 68.

The portrait also appeared in the well-illustrated volume published for the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris, *Une Mission au Sénégal: Ethnographie, Botanique, Zoologie, Géologie* (fig. 1.13).[129] In the section "*Les Races du Sénégal*," Dr. Lasnet, *Médecin de 1ere classe des Colonies*, describes the social mores of various ethnic groups living in Senegal including Maures, Peuls, Wolof, Sérères, Diolas, Toucouleurs and includes thirty-five photographs illustrating different types photographed by Hostalier, Trenchant, Noal and Fortier. The editors' attribution of the image of the Kora player to Hostalier is essential to identify him as the author of other unsigned postcards with the same backdrop, such as the portrait of the wives of the Wolof merchant.

Hostalier was active in Senegal between 1890 and 1912. Between 1890 and 1894, Hostalier worked as Bonnevide's assistant in the studio known as *Bonnevide-Hostalier: photographie des colonies*.[130] Together with Bonnevide and then independently, Hostalier produced a large variety of formats and images. Probably one generation younger than Bonnevide, Hostalier embraced the latest technical innovations including the production of postcards and possibly portraiture for the local elite. David traced Hostalier's published advertisements in the *Journal Official du Sénégal* between 1894 and 1914 as the competition with other photographers such as Noal was increasing.[131] While the specific circumstances of production are difficult to confirm, there is evidence that local customers commissioned portraits, which subsequently circulated (with or without their permission) in the form of postcards, as may have been the case for the wives of the Wolof merchants.[132]

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[129] Alexandre Bernard Etienne Antoine Lasnet, *Une Mission Au Sènègal: Ethnographie, Botanique, Zoologie, Gèologie*, Exposition Universelle De 1900 (Paris: A Challamel, 1900), 93.
[130] Hickling, "Bonnevide: Photographie Des Colonies: Early Studio Photography in Senegal."
[131] David, "Hostalier – Noal: Un Duel De Photographes Au Journal Officiel Du Sénégal, Il Y a Cent Ans."
[132] Not all photographers addressed the local clientele. For instance, both David and Hickling argue that at the beginning of his career Fortier was not a photographer to the elite and there is no evidence that he ever operated a

In this case it was possible to identify the author, but usually the authors of photographs printed on postcards cannot be determined. David's study revealed the quick transfer of studio collections from one photographer to another through partnerships and the purchase of images.[133] When acquiring the studio of a photographer, the new owner would also inherit the photo negatives, which would then circulate under his name and without any reference to the original photographer. This dynamic, which was rather common, makes the question of provenance—that is, attribution and dating—extremely complex for postcards.[134]

How were Hostalier's portraits included in the 1900 publication? Dr. Lasnet's text describes the Wolof as "*la race fine et aristocratique du pays.*"[135] Incidentally, while the other written chapters were juxtaposed with profile shots of half-dressed women (fig.1.15), in the Wolof section the author includes only portraits of lavishly dressed women, in this case photographed by Hostalier (fig.1.14). Lasnet provides the most interesting descriptions when talking about their clothing, one of the indicators of the different castes:

> In Saint Louis, they do not lack sophistication, the "*élégants"* gladly exhibit rich *boubous* with noticeable colors, with embroidered vests and mantles sold by the Moroccans; the days of holidays, they often wear soft boots that complete their outfit.[136]

The richness of the textile was always accompanied by intricate jewelry and hairdos:

> The Wolof, men and women, are very passionate about jewelry, they have the fingers overcharged with massive rings in silver or in leather, on the wrists they wear coral, leather, or silver bracelets, women also wear them around their ankles.[137]

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traditional portrait photography studio. "La Carte Postale Sénégalaise De 1900 À 1960," 7. Yet, during my research, I found a cabinet print signed by Fortier dating between the 1890s and 1900s capturing a male elite sitter.

[133] In the case of postcards specifically, with the exception of few powerful photographers such as Fortier who was in control of his negatives, many photographers did not necessarily control the circulation of their images "Hostalier – Noal: Un Duel De Photographes Au Journal Officiel Du Sénégal, Il Y a Cent Ans.".

[134] Hickling, "Bonnevide: Photographie Des Colonies: Early Studio Photography in Senegal," 352.

[135] Lasnet, *Une Mission Au Sènègal: Ethnographie, Botanique, Zoologie, Gèologie*, 112.

[136] "*A Saint Louis il ne manquait pas une certaine recherche, les élégants exhibent volontiers de riches boubous à couleurs voyantes avec des gilets à broderies, des manteaux, que leur vendent les Marocains; les jours de fête, ils portent souvent des bottes molles qui complètent leur tenue."* Ibid., 116.

[137] "*Les Ouolofs, homes et femmes, sont très amateurs de bijoux, ils ont les doigts surchargés de bagues massives en argent ou en cuivre, aux poignet ils portent des bracelets en corail, en cuivre ou en argent, les femmes en portent également aux chevilles*." Ibid.

Jewelry in gold from Senegal and Mali was and is renowned. The skill of the *bijoutier* or goldsmiths in reworking motifs from Islamic, European and North African traditions was astonishing in its complexity and variety. In Hostalier's photograph for instance, the sitter wears bracelets, rings, filigree gold spheres, pear-shaped pendants, and ear-clips fitted with multiple gold rings.[138] Among Wolof sitters, it was the combination of precious textiles, *fudon*—hand decorations on the fingertips made with henna—and fine golden jewelry that made the photograph special.

Nonetheless, in his ethnographic study, the French doctor hardly mentions how these practices changed over time according to the latest trends and in relation to the age and status of the sitter. The Senegalese's sensitivity for fashion and elegance, that demanded that a new ensemble would be commissioned for each new social event, both fascinated and frustrated the writer who perceived it as a combination of shortsightedness, indulgence and frivolity. In his words:

> They are big children who live only for pleasure and ostentation, incapable of thinking of the day after; they expose themselves to misery or famine in order to shine with a rich boubou or a nice decoration, spending all their money to pay for a pretty wife.[139]

Clothing and appearance are certainly important for the Wolof. However, this attitude is not necessarily triggered by frivolity; rather it is an expression of social honor. If Lasnet wrote that "*les différentes castes sont nettement séparées*," clothing was one of those modes in which social

[138] Timothy F. Garrard and Gold of Africa Barbier-Mueller Museum., *African Gold: Jewellry and Ornaments from Ghana, Cote D'ivoire, Mali and Senegal in the Collection of the Gold of Africa, Barbier-Mueller Museum in Cape Town* (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 22-39; Marian Ashby Johnson, "Gold Jewelry of the Wolof and the Tukulor of Senegal," *African Arts* 27 (1994).

[139] "*Ce sont de grands enfants ne vivant que pour le plaisir et l'ostentation, incapables de songer au lendemain, s'exposent à la misère ou à la famine pour briller avec un riche boubou ou un bel harnachement, dépensant tout leur argent pour se payer une jolie femme*." Lasnet, *Une Mission Au Sènègal: Ethnographie, Botanique, Zoologie, Gèologie*, 119.

class and moral status would be expressed.[140] In this sense, through portraiture, women in particular had the opportunity both to show their latest *boubou* and to share the photograph with their relatives and their wider social group.

The fact that postcards were often portraits originally commissioned by Senegalese sitters may come as a surprise—but these practices of reproduction have been central to the history of photography since its inception. McCauley explains this phenomenon: "perhaps the most revolutionary discovery that photographers made (with the help of their printmaking predecessors) was that more money could be earned by selling portraits to people who weren't the sitters than by selling to those who were."[141] In the specific case of postcards though, the collision between personal portrait—the single photograph—and public commodity—the postcard—is difficult to accommodate as they are often imagined as antithetical. The former is associated with an intimate, personal and private experience while the latter with a commercial, popular, public endeavor. The collapse of the two categories creates a breach in the public/private divide. In Pinney's words: "The anthropological works dealt with anonymous typical representatives of particular categories, whereas portraits were concerned with individual members of an elite, within which markers of ethnicity were downplayed."[142] In West Africa these two extremes often coincided; or rather, they were two sides of the same coin. The duty of the scholar who approaches this subject is to account for the ambiguity of the material, which acquired different meanings according to the context in which it circulated.

[140] Ibid., 117-8.
[141] Think for instance of Disderi's *Galerie des Contemporaines* where he photographed celebrities and sold those images with their biographies: McCauley, *A.A. Disderi and the Carte-De-Visite Portrait Photograph* 55.
[142] Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, 97.

Conclusion

The genesis of photography in the peripheries of empires has often been interpreted as the colonial powers' attempts to document and control their subjects, employing the camera as the principal tool of surveillance. Consequently, local "authentic" photographic languages are seen as emerging only decades later, often in the wake of independence. In this chapter I sought to demonstrate that, in the specific case of Senegal, this narrative is not accurate.

In Senegal the colonial administration did not implement an organized system of surveillance, identification and ethnic classification through photography, as was the case in British India. Archival research suggests that photo I.D. cards were imposed among Senegalese citizens only after independence in 1960; before then, interviews indicate that photo I.D.s were introduced to distinguish *originaires*, living in the Four Communes and possessing the right to vote, from the colonial subjects living in the rest of the country. The earliest photographers working in Senegal were mostly commercial practitioners who arrived in the 1850s and 60s from neighboring countries, Europe and the United States. Some were businessmen, as in the case of African-American Augustus Washington; others were itinerant photographers, as in the case of Gambian John Parkes Decker. Their clients were not only the French, but the local elite too.

From the 1870s onwards, as French photographers such as Bonnevide established more permanent studios in the colony, photographic portraiture became increasingly popular. Even if we do not have records of Senegalese photographers before the 1920s, customers such as the *originaires* and the Roi de Dakar were patrons of the technology as early as the late 1870s. By discussing *cartes-de-visite*, cabinet cards and postcards, this chapter considered the agency of these sitters in commissioning their portraits and experimenting with local and foreign codes of portraiture. With the rise of the circulation of postcards between the 1900s and 1920s, and

particularly in the representation of Wolof sitters, the redundancy of ways in which these codes were expressed suggests a similarity in status and a consolidation in portrait practices among the Saint Louisian elite at the turn of the century. The strengthening of local codes and the increasing number of upper class subjects signals a shift in the ways photography was understood, and an appreciation of the medium as one that could enable them to express their identity. Rather than just displaying the sitters' social identity, I argue that photography contributed to the introduction of new conceptions of personhood and individuality. As the *originaires* were required to have an identifying document that included their portrait, photography became associated with the privileges of the elite. I argue that the *originaires* embraced this technology because it allowed them to shape their identity as they defended their civic and civil rights as French citizens living in Senegal.

Shaden Tageldin argues that the early literature by post-colonialist authors such as Edward Said locked cultural imperialism into a binary of domination-resistance.[143] Within this schema, culture was a discursive armament that colonizers imposed and the colonized almost always opposed. Tageldin however argues that the tendency to view imperialism within this reductive framework ignores the permeability of cultural boundaries. More specifically, besides annihilating the agency of local authors—who within this framing can only be passive victims—these interpretations fall short in accounting for the promiscuity and ambiguity of objects such as photographs whose meanings change as the relation between photographer, photographed, photographic object and viewer varies.

As photo historian Ariella Azoulay has argued, photography as a medium "is not susceptible to monopolization" but rather is "an essential vector of change in the perceptual

[143] Shaden M. Tageldin, "Secularizing Islam: Carlyle, Al-Sibāʿī, and the Translations of "Religion" in British Egypt," *PMLA* (2011): 125.

matrix" that initiates a decentralization of the gaze.[144] Indeed, if we follow Azoulay's argument, the photograph escapes the authority of the photographer or "anyone's claim to sovereignty" because its significance is constantly negotiated among what she terms "the parties to the contract": namely the photographer, the photographed, camera, and the spectator.[145] If this dynamic is endogenous to the photograph, then as researchers we have the responsibility to actively document and narrate these negotiations. This practice enables us to approach nineteenth century portraits from a variety of angles, including those that account for the sitter's agency in framing her image.

[144] Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 113.
[145] Ibid., 112.

CHAPTER TWO

Competing Technologies: Lithography, Glass Painting and Photography (Or, the Popularization of Portraiture)

> *Just for a moment, picture to yourself a history of photography freed from the tyranny of the photograph. […] Photography's history would at last engage the photographic image in all its various manifestations, wherever and in whatever form they have appeared.*
>
> Geoffrey Batchen, "Double Displacement: Photography and Dissemination" (2013)[1]

In the 1910s, the Governor-General of French West Africa Amédée William Merlaud-Ponty began to notice an unprecedented circulation of images through the Sub-Saharan region.[2] They were not manufactured in France, nor were they produced locally; rather, they were imported into Senegal from Germany, Italy, North Africa and the Middle East. This visual material included chromolithographs and lithographs that were both political and religious in content. Perceived as a threat to France's colonial project, this material underwent the close scrutiny of the colonial administration, which at times destroyed or sequestered that which they perceived to be "seditious."[3] Besides revealing France's desperate attempt to insulate and control its subjects, Governor Ponty's observation is a precious litmus test regarding the circulation of

[1] Batchen, "Double Displacement: Photography and Dissemination," 1.
[2] The Federation of *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF) was created in 1895 as a union of Senegal, Soudan, Guinea and Ivory Coast. In 1902, its separate territorial administrations were subordinated to a Government-General, whose seat resided first in Saint Louis, then from 1904 in Dakar. In 1904, Dahomey was included in this group of colonies. Amédée William Merlaud-Ponty was Governor-General of French West Africa between 1908 and 1915.
[3] ANS 19G1, 15th November 1911. See annex 2.1 for the full letter.

images in Senegal in the 1910s. It allows us to trace the emergence of new networks of exchange and patterns of consumptions—all revolving around images.

Before the late nineteenth century, Senegal did not feature forms of portraiture. While *cartes-de-visite* and cabinet prints had circulated among the elite, chromos and glass paintings were responsible for the popularization of the genre of portraiture. Islam has often been blamed for the late introduction of print technologies in its cultures and for an essentially aniconic art practice. In this chapter, I will seek to demonstrate that in Senegal the opposite was the case.[4] The introduction and circulation of devotional images of Sufi saints and religious leaders into the French colony not only popularized portraiture, but triggered and cultivated a local taste for images that is still very much alive today. Inspired and authorized by the cult of saints[5] inherent to Sufi practices, the practice of displaying portraits within one's home and for one's personal devotional practices made this genre indispensable.

Islam was introduced in Senegal as early as the eleventh century, but it became the predominant religion only much later in the nineteenth century.[6] The spread of Islam, which coincided with the most intense phase of France's colonial conquest in the region, was led by a

[4] In studying the acceptance of print technology Messick builds his argument against Carter who in 1943 argued that Islam constituted a barrier to the introduction of the print technology. Brinkley Messick, "On the Question of Lithography," *Culture and History* 16 (1997): 158. The strictly aniconic quality of Islamic art—that is the absence of graphic representation—especially in Muslim devotional life, has been questioned by numerous scholars including Bravmann, Flaskerud, Flood and Grabar. Ingvild Flaskerud, "The Votive Image in Iranian Shi'ism," in *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam*, ed. Pedram Khosronejad, International Library of Iranian Studies (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012); René A. Bravmann, *African Islam* (Washington, DC; London: Smithsonian Institution Press; Ethnographica, 1983); Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Finbarr Barry Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 1 (2002); Bravmann, *African Islam*..

[5] Like Christianity, Sufi Islam also recognizes the existence of saints, or people who are recognized as having exceptional degree of holiness.

[6] M. Khadim Mbacké, "Impact De L'islam Sur La Société Sénégalaise " *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 4 (1998): 530; Amar Samb, "L'lslam Et I'histoire Du Sénégal," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique noire* (1971): 461-507.

handful of charismatic local Muslim clerics and warriors.[7] Adherents to Sunni Islam, Senegalese Muslims follow both the Quran and the sayings and actions of the prophet Muhammad as recorded in the *hadiths.* Articulated around Sufism, the religious experience in Senegal privileges the mystical dimension of spiritual practice. Similar to other Sufi communities, Senegalese Muslims—who today make up more than 90% of the total population—are organized in orders that are formed around the figure of a main leader, the relationship between the seeker (*talibé*) and the teacher (*marabout*) being paramount. The *marabout* is not only a teacher, however, but —as any Sufi saint— also a powerful channel of divine grace who can help disciples in their path towards enlightenment. Within this framework, Senegal's main Sufi brotherhoods —namely the Tijāniyya or Tidianes, the Muridiyyah or Mourides, and the Layenes— have very distinctive relationships with their respective guides. The Mourides have an exceptional fascination with their founder, Amadou Bamba, who is mythicized also as a political hero, who fought against colonialism.[8]

The link between the French colonial project and the spread of Islam is crucial. This tension, which materialized in the clash between the French civil system and the Islamic cultural and legal system, is one of the main axes in the development of the Senegalese political and social identity. But the relationship between France and Islam was not always a hostile one. The French administration's attitude towards Senegal's *Islam Noir* and its leaders varied greatly, from times when the latter were perceived as a threat to their expansion —particularly when the leader and Islamic scholar al-Hajj Umar Tall launched his *jihad* against French occupation in 1852—to times when the colonial authorities favored Islam over local "primitive" belief

[7] On the spread of Islam in Senegal see Lucie G. Colvin, "Islam and the State of Kajoor: A Case of Succesful Resistance to Jihad," *The Journal of African History* 15, no. 4 (1974).
[8] His *talibés* often celebrate him as a national hero although scholars have challenged this argument. Robinson, "The Murids: Surveillance and Collaboration," 194.

systems.[9] In those instances, religions such as Islam were regarded as a "step up" that would encourage the natives' social and political development.[10]

The spread of Islam via Sufi practices in the late nineteenth century led to an unprecedented demand for images that circulated in different formats, including glass painting, chromolithographs and photography. This chapter is not about any of these media per se. It will not consider the whole history of glass painting or chromolithography: rather, it focuses on the interaction—both theoretical and formal—*between* chromos, photographs and glass paintings and the migration of images *across* the three. This chapter will concentrate on three pivotal moments within this history of intermediality during which glass painting was used to reproduce chromos, frame photographic portraits and eventually mimic and replace photographic portraiture altogether. In tracing the migration of images on different supports, it will be possible to sketch the trajectory of the popularization of portraiture.

In writing histories of photography in Europe and the US, scholars have put enormous effort into challenging certain understandings of photography in which it is isolated from the wider media production, as if it emerged from a vacuum. Art historian Stephen Bann has demonstrated that in early twentieth century photographs, prints and paintings were often used interchangeably.[11] On the African continent, scholars have attempted to situate photography within well-rooted artistic practices. In the 1970s Steven Sprague studied Yoruba photographic

[9] Besides Christopher Harrison's *France and Islam in West Africa*, for further reading on France's ambiguous relation with Islam in West Africa see: Donal Cruise O' Brien, "Towards an 'Islamic Policy' in French West Africa, 1854-1914," *The Journal of African History* 8, no. 2 (1967); David Robinson, "French 'Islamic' Policy and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Senegal," ibid.29, no. 3 (1988).
[10] Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4-10.
[11] Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France*.

practices within the medium's "cultural biographies"—to use Igor Kopytoff's terms.[12] More recently, scholars such as Chris Geary, Till Förster and Erin Haney have analyzed the history of the photographic portraits that migrated across media in the late twentieth century, discussing the significance and impact of producing and consuming the same image via different supports, historical circumstances and geographic locations.[13] Nonetheless, very little research has been done on the earlier history of intermediality between photography and other technologies, such as glass painting and lithographs. By studying the "unity as well as the distinction of image and medium" to use Hans Belting's words, this chapter traces the significance of portraiture and its relation to the *réel*.[14]

The chapter is divided into three main parts. The first section provides a bibliographic review of the literature on glass painting, which to a large extent, functioned as a liaison between chromos and photographs. This overview is necessary in order to map how glass painting has previously been understood and framed. The second part focuses on the interaction between chromolithography and glass painting. The last section deals with the relation between glass painting and photography. This chapter will further discuss the relation between modernity and reproduction, and between modernity and the vernacular by studying the tension between artwork and ornament, original and copy, and handmade and machine-made objects. The investigation of these parallel visual practices offers new possibilities of access to the phenomenon of the photograph and the popularization of portraiture in twentieth century Senegal.

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[12] Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," 52; Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things. Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 66-68.
[13] Till Förster, "The Intermediality of Portraiture in Northern Côte D'ivoire," in *Portraiture and Photography in Africa*, ed. John Peffer and Elisabeth Lynn Cameron (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 407-12; Haney, "Lutterodt Family Studios and the Changing Face of Early Portrait Photographs from the Gold Coast " 67-68; Christaud M. Geary, "The Past in the Present: Photographic Portraiture and the Evocation of Multiple Histories in the Bamum Kingdom of Cameroon," ibid., 213-14.
[14] Hans Belting, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (2005): 304.

A historiography of Senegalese glass painting

The historiography of glass painting (or *souwer* in Wolof) reveals a medium that was at times celebrated as the most authentic form of art in Senegal, and at times dismissed as a naïve pictorial language. Starting in the late 1960s, glass paintings were featured in contemporary art exhibitions and anthropological studies; they were collected as fine art and bought as decorative objects. This ambivalent dynamic indicates a deep anxiety about the nature of Senegalese art, interpolated between "Western" idioms and "local" traditions, between popular artifacts and high art. This chapter seeks to bypass this dichotomy by presenting glass painting as deeply imbricated in the visual language of modernity, precisely because of its symbiotic relation to photography, duplication and global mobility. If modern painting in Africa is often understood as a derivative practice of Western aesthetic traditions—oil-painting being one of the most highly-regarded genres at least since the Renaissance—the history of glass painting in Senegal forces us to move beyond a Eurocentric system of reference.

One of the earliest written references to glass painting can be found in the reviews of the 1966 Festival mondial des arts nègres—a watershed event that established Dakar as the main hub for contemporary art in the continent and introduced modern African art to a global audience.[15] In a review of this event for the French journal *Afrique*, glass painting was mentioned *en-passant* as the unidentified critic recounted the success of Senegalese artists during the Festival. The reviewer situates the work of these modern painters in the tradition of popular painting called *souwer*.[16] The article presented *souwer* as a "spontaneous" artform that gives a plastic form to

[15] This was the earliest reference I have been able to find. However, a closer analysis of primary sources in early twentieth century publications may reveal more. "Peinture Populaire Et Art Moderne," *Afrique* no. 4 (1966).
[16] "*Les artistes sénégalais, quant à eux, n'ont sous les yeux que les œuvres d'un artisanat où prévaut le sens de la décoration et du raffinement, ou les produits d'une peinture populaire pleine de saveur et d'humour: dessins historiques faisant office de toiles de fond pour les représentations des griots toucouleurs, peintures sous verre exécutées sur commande dans la Médina de Dakar - l'acheteur désignant lui-même le héros légendaire ou le sujet*

myths and legends that are equally expressed in dance, wrestling, poetry and music. Glass painting is understood as a vernacular practice rooted in indigenous traditions and employing a naïve formal lexicon.

At the time of the review, glass painters had not been included in the Festival. Glass painting, as well as photography, was virtually absent from Senghor's writings and politics—oil painting, sculpture and tapestry being his favorite media to articulate a modern African visual language.[17] The monumental scale of tapestry was favored over the more intimate dimensions of glass paintings and photographs. While the history of modern art in Senegal can hardly bypass the figure of Senghor, the arts of glass painting and photography developed independently from the president-poet's politics of aesthetics.[18]

In 1979 twenty-three glass paintings were exhibited internationally for the first time as part of the second traveling exhibition dedicated to contemporary Senegalese art.[19] *Contemporary Art of Senegal* travelled between 1979 and 1981 to six museum across the US and Canada.[20] The exhibition collected and presented oil paintings from the École de Dakar

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qu'il souhaite voir traité - pirogues Sérères ou scènes de la vie quotidienne ornant les murs des maisons dakaroises." Ibid., 61.

[17] According to my research, Senghor never wrote about glass painting. In 1985, Senghor wrote a forward for the exhibition *Senegal Narrative Paintings*. However, in the short text, the President-Poet did not discuss about glass painting, but instead focused on the relation between Senegal and Louisiana, which had motivated the exhibition. *Senegal, Narrative Paintings: The Collection of Maurice Dedieu*, (Lafayette, La.: University Art Museum, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1986).

[18] For a detailed discussion of Senghor's understanding of images see Chapter Four.

[19] The catalogue does not include images of the glass paintings. However, the titles describe their subject matter: Amadou Bamba, Al Burak, Lat Dior and secular stories. These glass paintings mostly belonged to private collections and were anonymous apart from three works out of twenty-three: two by Gora Mbengue and one by Sall. They are marked as belonging to the collection M. Gaye or the private C.E.E. collection. Only one was mentioned as belonging to the state collection. Art Gallery of Hamilton (Ont.), *Contemporary Art of Senegal = Art Contemporain Du Sénégal: [Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, August 11-September 23, 1979]* (Hamilton, Ont.: The Gallery, 1979).

[20] There were a few small exhibitions of glass paintings prior to the 1979 international exhibition in Dakar. Michel Renaudeau argued that he had organized a few exhibitions in 1975 at his gallery, Gallerie28 but I have not been able to find evidence (Michel Renaudeau, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2011). This major travelling exhibition followed the 1974 major exhibition on contemporary Senegalese art that had travelled to Paris, but did not include glass painting. Galeries nationales du Grand Palais France, *Art Sénégalais D'aujourd'hui: Galeries Nationales Du Grand Palais 26 Avril-24 Juin 1974* (Paris: Éditions musées nationaux, 1974).

alongside *souwer*. In the catalogue, glass painting is presented as "one of Senegal's most vibrant forms of popular art."[21] As an urban phenomenon, *souwer* depicts the culture of African cities: "something which is too often neglected or ignored in African studies, in which the tendency is to focus attention only on the traditional artistic forms of rural Africa."[22] While the author maintains that this is a "simple reproduction technique," he still recognizes that there is room for creativity, even as artists sell their works on a commercial basis.[23]

Senghor's massive investment in the arts consequently fostered research on the routes and roots of Senegalese art. In a country where sculptural traditions hardly existed, glass painting became of those sources to be studied.[24] Although by the 1970s glass paintings were no longer popular among Senegalese clientele, French and Belgian citizens who were temporally living in Senegal helped to revive the practice by studying and collecting examples of the artform, which could not be found in neighboring countries.[25] Between 1981 and 1983 Catherine Camus, Marie-Hélène Boisdur de Toffol and Michèle Strobel wrote their dissertations on Islamic imageries and glass painting in Senegal, in attempts to record the history of the art form.[26] These texts make the

[21] Art Gallery of Hamilton (Ont.), *Contemporary Art of Senegal = Art Contemporain Du Sénégal: [Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, August 11-September 23, 1979]*, 9.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] On sculptural practices in Senegal see: Kart, "From Direct Carving to Récupération: The Art of Moustapha Dimé in Post-Independence Senegal 1974-1997," 36-40; 75-78; 163-71.
[25] Michèle Strobel was in Senegal between 1975 and 1982 when she started her research for her dissertation; Michel Renaudeau was also based in Dakar between 1960 and 1985 and among his many activities he collected the work of and supported glass painters who had almost gone out of business. Lastly, Madame Crespin, who belonged to a historical Senegalese *metisse* family became an active supporter of this practice: in 1982 she met glass painter Gora Mbengue and offered him a studio in her house in Gorée, where he could have more visibility with tourists. (Mary Josè Crespin, personal communication, Gorée, Senegal, 2012; Petit Mbengue, Personal communication, Guédiawaye, Senegal, 2013; Michel Renaudeau, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2011.)
[26] Michèle Strobel, "L'imagerie Religieuse Au Sénégal" (Université des sciences humaines, 1982); Catherine Camus, "Iconographie Islamique Au Sénégal" (Université de Paris VII, 1983); Marie-Hélène Boisdur de Toffol, "Contacts De Civilisations Au Sènègal: Le Phènomëne De La Peinture Sur Verre," *Jean Laude: dialogues entre les cultures* Paris: Collectif pour l'Histoire de l'Art (1985); "Contacts De Civilisations Au Sènègal: Le Phènomëne De La Peinture Sur Verre" (Thesis/dissertation (deg), Universitè de Paris I, UER d'Arts plastiques et sciences de l'art, 1982).

first references to the arrival of glass painting into Senegal from North Africa, thereby situating Senegal in a wider visual culture.

Strobel, who completed her Ph.D. in 1982 in the Department of Social Sciences under the ethnographer Viviane Pâque, remains the most quoted source on this artform. She resided in the capital Dakar between 1975 and 1982, and taught at the École des Beaux Arts training students such as Anta Germaine Gueye, who then became a glass painter herself, and one of the few contemporary female artists in Senegal.[27] Strobel's objective is the study of religious images in Senegal; her focus is neither the medium, nor a specific artist. While situating her research inside the Wolof social system, Strobel seeks to provide a syncretic history analyzing the production and consumption of images among local Islamic brotherhoods, namely the Mourides, Tidianes and Layen. Besides Strobel's attention to the social dynamics that regulate this métier—i.e. caste system, religious affiliation and ethnicity—her work is particularly valuable for her systematic collection of images that constitutes a unique visual archive, considering the fragility of the support.[28] Furthermore, she is the first scholar to have traced the early history of glass painting using primary sources from her field and archival research at the Archives National du Sénégal (ANS).

The publication of sections of Strobel's dissertation with images from the collection of the French photographer Michel Renaudeau in 1984 marked a turning point.[29] The resulting book was the first major catalogue devoted solely to Senegalese glass painting displaying a rich variety of *souwer* that Strobel and Renaudeau had collected during their residencies in Senegal, during which they had both been well integrated into the arts scene. Following Strobel and Renaudeau's catalogue, the publication of numerous smaller catalogues and exhibitions on glass

[27] Anta Germaine Gueye, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2013
[28] In Senegal *souwer* were generally very cheap to buy. Whenever they broke they would be replaced immediately.
[29] Michel Renaudeau and Michèle Strobel, *Peinture Sous Verre Du Sénégal* (Paris, Dakar: Nathan; NEA, 1984).

painting took place in Africa, Europe and the US.[30] Ten years later, in 1993, the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Central organized the first major exhibition solely devoted to glass painting.[31]

The research undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s had a dramatic impact on glass painting practices, as they inspired artists to sign their works and stage exhibitions alongside other artists of the École de Dakar. Paradoxically, precisely when this medium began to attract international attention its popularity among the local clientele vanished. After experiencing its heyday between the 1920s and 1950s, glass painting had fallen out of favor with Senegalese patrons, who could now place their photos in more practical photo albums or buy inexpensive prints to decorate their homes. The market of *souwer* continues to exist today, however its market is almost exclusively the foreign clientele.

With the exception of the publications herein discussed, glass painting has received surprisingly little attention.[32] The two major publications by Bouttieux and Strobel constitute a basic taxonomy, an ordering of data—objects and attributes—according to groups, each forming a set (religious and secular themes; motifs linked to each brotherhoods), and only briefly mention the relation between photography and glass painting. In attesting to the art form's rich historical context for the first time, these publications provide an important introduction to its practice. However, neither publication focuses on the formal analysis of specific works or situates them

[30] Michel Renaudeau, *Sénégal, Regards Croisés: Les Peintres Du Suweer* (Dakar: Senegal: Éditions Vives Voix, 2010); African-American Institute, *Treasures of a Popular Art: Paintings on Glass from Senegal* (New York: African-American Institute, 1986); Howard Schissel, "Coloring History: Senegalese Glass Painting," *Africa Report*, no. March-April (1989); Leonardo A. Villalón, "Asr Focus: Islamism in West Africa: Senegal," *African Studies Review* 47, no. 2 (2004).

[31] Anne-Marie Bouttiaux conducted research in Dakar in 1991 and the artist Fode Camera introduced her to glass painters (Anne-Marie Bouttieux, personal communication, 2014). Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, Martine Jawerbaum, and Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale., *Senegal Behind Glass: Images of Religious and Daily Life* (Munich; New York: Prestel, 1994).

[32] Other scholars have discussed glass paintings as part of their much broader research. For instance, the Roberts addressed it within the Mouride visual culture, Diouf in a short article on Arab and Wolof modernity, and Abdou Sylla within a study on figuration and Islam. Mamadou Diouf, "Islam: Peinture Sous Verre Et Idéologie Populaire," *Art pictural zaïrois* (1992); Allen F. Roberts and Mary Nooter Roberts, ""Paintings Like Prayers": The Hidden Side of Senegalese Reverse-Glass "Image/Texts"," *Research in African Literatures* 31, no. 4 (2000); Abdou Sylla, "La Question De La Figuration Dans L'islam Et La Peinture Sous Verre Sénégalaise," *Éthiopiques* 66-67 (2001).

vis-à-vis parallel aesthetic traditions in North Africa and the Middle East. This chapter seeks to move beyond a basic taxonomy of artforms by discussing the relation between chromolithographs, photography and glass painting.

"Un nouveau besoin"

In tracing the early history of glass painting, Strobel was the first scholar to make note of the correspondence between the Governor-General of French West Africa (AOF) William Ponty[33] and the colonial administration in its relation to the artform. In a 1985 publication, she singles out this specific passage from a 1911 letter: [34]

> Syrians and Moroccans are importing in the colony abnormal quantities of publications of all types written in Arabic as well as color prints representing scenes from the Islamic religious life […]. All the publications and prints that feature a hostile character or simply seem to favor the *marabous*' activities should be destroyed.[35]

Based on this evidence, Strobel infers that the implementation of the instructions in the letter created a void in the Senegalese art market that was then filled by local glass painters who reproduced the images that could no longer be found in imported works.[36] Interestingly,

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[33] Governor William Ponty replaced Governor Roume in 1907, and remained in the position until his death in 1915. Ponty was among the most influential of all Governor-Generals as he was one of the few men in this position to have a distinct vision of the nature of African society. Governor Ponty believed that the French were witnessing the end of a feudal society, which had been created by the jihad states of the 18th and 19th centuries, in which the nobility and the *marabouts* had joined forces to exploit the masses. Slavery was the key to this analysis of society. In the late 1900, Governor Ponty launched his *politique des races,* which remained a central plank of "native administration" of successive administrations in AOF. Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960*, 49-50.

[34] While in the 1985 publication by Strobel and Renaudeau it is stated that the letter was from 1908, in the 1982 dissertation it is stated that the letter was written in 1911 Renaudeau and Strobel, *Peinture Sous Verre Du Sénégal*, 50; Strobel, "L'imagerie Religieuse Au Sénégal," 13. In my research, I did not find anything from 1908. I believe the correct date is 1911.

[35] "*Syriens et marocains font pénétrer dans la colonie quantités anormales de publications de toute nature rédigées en langue arabe ainsi que de grossières gravures colorées représentant des scènes de la vie religieuse musulmane… Journaux, brochures, images diverses sont destinés aux marabouts, talibés, lettres ou prétendus tels qui assurent la vente des gravures… Toutes les publications et gravures présentant un caractère hostile ou simplement susceptibles de favoriser l'action maraboutique devront être détruites… on ne saurait nier quel merveilleux instrument de propagande constitue ici la propagation à des milliers d'exemplaires de ces gravures grossiers, hautes en couleur présentant les défenseurs de la seule vraie religion sous le jour le plus favorable."* ANS 19G1, 15th November 1911. See annex 2.1 for the full letter.

[36] Strobel, "L'imagerie Religieuse Au Sénégal," 14.

following Strobel, scholars have repeatedly quoted this passage without challenging her interpretation.[37] While this censoring impulse is undeniable, the artform's actual historical development is much more complex, and the relation between censorship and the spreading of glass painting less obvious.

A close reading of primary sources reveals that the implementation of this letter in the whole of the AOF proved to be arduous. Firstly, the attempt to censor religious material fell afoul of the 1881 law that defended the freedom of practicing their faiths.[38] Secondly, in Ponty's extensive correspondence that spanned almost two decades, there are only a few occasions indicated in which "dangerous" material was successfully withdrawn from the market. On these occasions, which from the archival records at ANS number less than six,[39] the visual material included: portraits of the sultans and Turkish ministers; engravings on the Ottoman fleet outside Constantinople; the burial of the Prophet Mohammed in Medina; El-Buraq, a winged figure described in the Quran; views of Mecca and Medina; and satirical images from magazines such as the Egyptian *Cairo Punch* (fig.2.1).[40] For Ponty these images were "*les adversaires*

[37] Bouttiaux, Jawerbaum, and Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale., *Senegal Behind Glass: Images of Religious and Daily Life*; Diouf, "Islam: Peinture Sous Verre Et Idéologie Populaire."; Serigne N'Diaye, "L'intérieur D'une Chambre Moyenne Des Années 1950 Au Sénégal" (École Nationale des Arts, 2011); Roberts and Roberts, ""Paintings Like Prayers": The Hidden Side of Senegalese Reverse-Glass "Image/Texts"."; Sylla, "La Question De La Figuration Dans L'islam Et La Peinture Sous Verre Sénégalaise."; Ibrahima Thioub, "Savoirs Interdits En Contexte Colonial: La Politique Culturelle De La France En Afrique De L'ouest," in *"Mama Africa": Hommage a Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch*, ed. Chantal Chanson-Jabeur and Goerg Odile (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005). Among these writers Ibrahima Thioub takes the most extreme position by referring to "radical interdiction." Ibid., 81.
[38] Circular 20 April 1881 ANS 19G4; also for the difference between images against French colonization and images of the prophet see letter n.864, 1911 Sept 19th ANS 19G4 and n.74, 25th January 1912 in ANS 19G4.
[39] Portraits of sultans (1910 November 25th, circular n.1047 ANS 19G4); portrait of Turk ministers and sultans (1910 December 10th, ANS 19G4); images of Turk ministers (1911 December 21st, circular 1196, ANS 19G4); chromos depicting the Italian-Turk war and portraits of Ottoman figures (1914 November 19th, circular n. 731, ANS 19G4); list of images that were taken in Guiney and that were all printed in Germany (ca. 1914, ANS 19G4) (See annex 2.3).
[40] At the ANS, I was able to study the correspondence among the colonial administration—that is, between the Governor General and the Governors Lieutenants of the specific countries, and the minister of the Colonies in France—between 1910 and 1917 (folders 19G4 and 19G1). While the documents contained there may not be exhaustive, as certain letters are surely missing, I was able to retrace the exchange with confidence. As part of the surveillance of the Islamic press, in 1910 they sequestered in Dakar portraits of sultans and minister Turks. In 1911, the owner of the Egyptian satirical magazine *Cairo Punch*, M. Zaki, based in Bologna, protested because his magazines were sequestered in Dakar. On November 12th 1912, the General Governor wrote a letter to the Minister

irréductibles de notre domination," either because they seemed to celebrate and aid the spread of Islam, or represented European and Ottoman political leaders who resisted the French colonial power.[41] These political and religious images could, according to Ponty, encourage their colonial subjects to reject French domination.[42] Ponty's interpretation of these images as propaganda reveals a deep-seated insecurity about the stability of the French colonial domination in the region—as well as an intuition regarding the power of images.

Following the historian Christopher Harrison, I argue that Ponty's political stance needs to be situated within the wider frame of French political attitudes towards Islam that developed as early as the 1860s.[43] France's position towards Islam was ambiguous; and was not applied homogeneously across *La Grande France*.[44] Between 1898 and 1912 there was a growing fear of Islam and the colonial administration started to closely monitor the circulation of press in Arabic in 1906 under the "Bureau des Affaires Musulmanes."[45] Rather than being worried about religious brotherhoods in West Africa, the colonial administration's primary concern was to keep the AOF unsullied by foreign Islamic influences from North Africa and Turkey. This apprehension went hand in hand with a suspicion of the increasing number of immigrants and

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of the Colonies explaining the Zaki case, arguing that those images were not neutral but rather dangerous. On November 15th 1911 the Governor-General sent a circular to the whole of French West Africa denouncing this dangerous circulation of images. This is the letter mentioned by Strobel. On December 21st 1911, other images were seized. In 1912, the French ministry started the production of new images. In 1914, in Guinea-Conakry, the French administration stopped chromes printed in Germany (letter in annex 2.3 with full list). In 1917, the French were still discussing details about the circulation of lithographs across the AOF.

[41] ANS 19G4, 12 November 1911, circular 2216, annex 2.4

[42] On January 21st 1915 Governor Ponty wrote that: "it has been signaled at different times that Syrians were selling chromolithographs representing almost exclusively the royal families in Germany and Italy, the Sultan or politicians that can exert a bad influence on the mentality of our indigenous." (ANS Circular n. 63 13G67).

[43] Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960*.

[44] Differently from Harrison, Ibrahima Thioub argues that the French administration "elaborated a politics that aimed at containing the real or supposed threats of challenging her supremacy by the states and reformatory Islamic movements that were considered as the biggest obstacles to the construction of her hegemony." He continues that this strategy implied three main axes: eliminate the Islamic power via the army, promote a Muslim literate elite that is favorable to the colonial order and capable of controlling the reformatory *marabouts*, and cut the umbilical cord between West African Islam and the Ummah universal. Thioub, "Savoirs Interdits En Contexte Colonial: La Politique Culturelle De La France En Afrique De L'ouest," 77.

[45] Ibid., 78.

traders from the Arab world settling in the AOF—ergo Ponty's mention of "*Syriens et Marocains"* in his 1911 letter.

As part of this anti-Muslim sentiment, and with the intention to preserve "Senegal's ancestral customs," the administration monitored not only the Islamic press but also the circulating imagery.[46] It is significant that by the 1910s, the Lieutenant-Governor of Senegal had realized that the lithographs being sold "corresponded to a need," and encouraged Ponty to replace them with ones that enhanced France's image and mission abroad.[47] In his words:

> A certain number of chromos were taken, but the fact that natives buy them *corresponds to a need*. We need then at the same time that we find the dangerous chromos, that we replace them with others. There might be an interest that the General Governor researches the compositions of this type, whose distribution will serve our politics, and fabricates them as needed. These will then be sold at low prices to Syrians or others who will be in charge of disseminating them among the indigenous milieu. *This issue is not of crucial importance, but it needs to be examined*. At the time of the Russian-Japanese war, Japanese inundated the Far East with prints and postcards representing their troops fighting the Russians on land and sea; *images that capture the eyes and force one's attention are a sure means to shape the mentality of native people, [who are] unpolished and do not read.* The current war will offer us an excellent occasion to use the same means.[48]

In a country where the majority of the population did not read French, the colonial administration understood the potential visual material could have to influence its subjects' perceptions. To serve his mission, Ponty chose color engravings of French heroes and interior views of French factories.[49] In June 1912, the colonial ministry approved the payment of 100 francs to the lithographers Cantin Bros in Paris for a quantity of these engravings.[50] Within this tension between perceived and calculated propaganda, what remains to be addressed is what triggered a need for images among Senegalese—who had previously consumed none.

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[46] Governor Ponty quoted in Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960*, 51.
[47] ANS 13G6 n. 721 January 1915
[48] ANS 13G67 ANS 21/-1 (see annex 2.2 for full text)
[49] Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960*, 52.
[50] ANS 19G4 letter n. 1638

Portraits on paper and glass

Findings from archival and field research suggest that the chromos bought in the AOF before the 1950s were printed in Germany, Italy, Egypt and Syria. Lithography was popular in Islamic countries in North Africa as early as the 1840s.[51] Andre Demeerseman is one of the first scholars to study printing practices among Arabs and North Africans.[52] He argues that lithography is an "ideal invention for Muslim countries, as it does not unsettle the past, and it gives unique advantages." He continues, "Lithography is one of those inventions that was naturally destined to have considerable success in all Islamic countries."[53] The reasons, he explains, are multiple—technical, artistic, cultural, social and economic—but the main axis revolves around the importance within Islamic cultures of calligraphy and writing, which lithography—rather than typography—was able to reproduce perfectly.[54] Indeed, lithography is based directly on handwriting made for the purpose of reproduction. Messick pushes this argument even further by arguing that lithography also mirrored the oral dimension of Islamic writing: "the lithograph retains indexical echoes of the recitational, oral qualities that underpinned manuscript texts in genres such as law, while the printed text eradicates, or further distances such traces."[55] This relation between copy and original, and the role of recitation within

[51] Andre Demeerseman, "Une Parente Méconnue De L'imprimerie Arabe Et Tunisienne, La Lithographie," *IBLA* 64, no. 4 (1953): 350; *La Lithographie Arabe Et Tunisienne* (Tunis: Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes, 1954), 4.
[52] The literature on chromolithography and lithography in Muslim countries is rather limited, for further reading see Moezzi, Pinney, Robinson, Messick, Marzolph and Saeed for India. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Icon and Meditation: Between Popular Art an Sufism in Imami Shi'ism," in *The Art and Material Culture of Iranina Shi'ism*, ed. Pedram Khosronejad (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012); Christopher Pinney, *'Photos of the Gods:' The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion, 2004); Germain Ayache, "L'apparition De L'imprimerie Au Maroc," *Hesperis-Tamuda* 5 (1964); Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993); Messick, "On the Question of Lithography."; Yousuf Saeed, "Writing an Art History of the Bazaars," *Revue of Glocal Studies* 1, no. 1 (2013); Ulrich Marzolph, *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books*, Handbook of Oriental Studies Section One, near and Middle East, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001).. For articles on the history of the press in Senegal see Pasquier, "Les Débuts De La Presse Au Sénégal."
[53] Demeerseman, *La Lithographie Arabe Et Tunisienne*, 5; 17.
[54] "Une Parente Méconnue De L'imprimerie Arabe Et Tunisienne, La Lithographie," 363.
[55] Messick, "On the Question of Lithography," 168.

Islamic cultures is a crucial one and we will return to this issue later in the chapter.

While the specific circumstances of their circulation are difficult to trace, it seems that lithographs were imported into Senegal by local pilgrims returning from Mecca, as well as Lebanese and Syrian merchants who sold them within the AOF.[56] In the 1880s, Senegal witnessed the first migration wave from Lebanon and Syria; by the 1930s some six thousand citizens of the Mandatory states of Lebanon and Syria resided across the AOF.[57] These migrants, whose original intent was to reach the Americas, were convinced by the colonial authorities to stay in West Africa and function as mediators between the administration and its colonial subjects. Eventually Syrians and Lebanese opened shops and bookshops, facilitating the circulation of periodicals, books and images in the main urban areas.

The introduction of chromolithographs had an immense impact on the ways in which devotion was understood and practiced. The mass-production of multi-color prints led to an unprecedented dissemination of images that were no longer an *appanage* of the elite. While in other Islamic countries such as Iran, Turkey or Tunisia print technology built on pre-existing pictorial traditions of portable icons and votive images, in Senegal these traditions had not been prevalent.[58] Faithful Muslims could now buy inexpensive portraits of their spiritual guides to receive their benediction, or *baraka*. These could also direct their meditation—the portrait being

[56] This idea is presented in the correspondence of the colonial administration in 1911. (ANS letter 178 19G4)
[57] Lebanese migrants, both Muslim and Christian first arrived in West Africa as they were trying to reach the US or South America. They arrived mostly in two waves: first in the 1880s and a larger second wave in the 1920s. It is important to underline that they did not arrive as an ethnically unified community. Lebanese Christian and particularly Maronite groups did not want to be associated with the Syrians and Muslims. The French colonial power convinced them to stay in West Africa to work as intermediaries especially in the peanut trade. Yet the French soon started to see the Lebanese as a threat to their power in West Africa, and started an anti-Lebanese campaign in the 1930s. Mara Leichtman, "From the Cross (and Crescent) to the Cedar and Back Again: Transnational Religion and Politics among Lebanese Christians in Senegal," *Anthropological Quaterly* 86, no. 1 (2013): 48; Andrew Kerim Arsan, "Failing to Stem the Tide: Lebanese Migration to French West Africa and the Competing Prerogatives of the Imperial State," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53, no. 3 (2011): 450.
[58] Amir-Moezzi, "Icon and Meditation: Between Popular Art an Sufism in Imami Shi'ism," 25.

both a vehicle of grace and a contemplative device.[59] The popularity of this material, which circulated via newspapers, magazines, and religious publications in the 1900s, boosted its local market and glass painting was popularized as a technology that allowed for an even cheaper dissemination of these images, particularly in Senegal, where the litho-press became available only a few decades later.[60]

Tracing the early history of glass painting is challenging, not only because few exemplars have survived, but also because painters did not date or sign their works at least until the 1960s. Regardless, the oldest glass paintings documented by Strobel invariably deal with religious themes—mostly treating Shi'ite topics and motifs (2.2).[61] Therefore, while the colonial administration sequestered all types of chromolithographs[62] that seemed "seditious" to their eyes, the Senegalese clientele, who at some point in the first decades of the twentieth century commissioned and bought glass-paintings, seemed predominantly interested in religious material.[63]

Figure 2.3 presents a chromolithograph that was collected in Senegal. While it is undated, it was probably printed around the 1930s. The Arabic text at the bottom reveals that it is the third of a series that was produced in the Soap Market of Aleppo, Syria.[64] The inscription within the image itself identifies the main subject: Al-Buraq, a creature from the heavens that carried the

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[59] Pedram Khosronejad, *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam*, International Library of Iranian Studies (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 175-76; ibid.

[60] It is possible that glass paintings were imported from other countries first and then used to copy images in Senegal. More research should be done on the circulation of similar motifs in Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Tunisia and Senegal. During my research in Senegal, I was able to find lithographs that were printed locally but probably in the 1940s or 50s. Mohamed Masmoudi, "La Peinture Sous Verre En Tunisie," *La revue française de l'elite europeenne.* 244 (1971); Müzesi Pera and Neveser Aksoy, *Around the World under Glass: An Excursion through the Enchanting World of Reverse-Glass Painting with Examples from Four Continents*, Pera Museum Publication (Istanbul: Pera Museum, 2005), 21; Mohamed Masmoudi, *La Peinture Sous Verre En Tunisie* (Tunis: Cérès Productions, 1972); "La Peinture Sous Verre En Tunisie."; *La Peinture Sous Verre En Tunisie*.

[61] At the archives of Musée du Quai Branly there is a photo collection of glass painting collected by Strobel.

[62] In my archival and bibliographic research I have never found references to censoring or monitoring glass paintings.

[63] ANS 19G1, 15th November 1911. See annex 2.1 for the full letter.

[64] I wish to thank Prof. Barry Flood for the translation from Arabic into English.

prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem as described in one of the chapters, or *sura,* of the Quran.[65] The figure of Al-Buraq was extremely popular among Muslims and its image could be found from Africa to Indonesia. Besides recovering another chromolithograph from the same series also framed under glass in the 1950s (fig. 2.4), Strobel documents the existence of numerous glass paintings that reproduced this specific version of the winged-figure with the head of a woman (fig. 2.5). While the fine details of the creature are lost in the reproductions, its composition and outline suggest a shared source.

In Tunisia too, glass paintings rework the image of Al-Buraq with elaborate jewelry adorning the face and brilliant plumage in her colorful peacock's tail (fig. 2.6). While the Tunisian glass paintings were not a copy of the Syrian chromolithograph, the matching proportions and features confirm the currency of this subject matter and the shared aesthetic references among these communities. As stated by art historian Mohamed Masmoudi, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Tunisia had strong glass painting traditions since at least the nineteenth century, and before that, had rooted practices of religious pictorial art and portable icons where the borders between learned and popular religion blurred.[66] In this sense, future research on

[65] In one letter, where Governor Ponty was trying to convince the Minister of the Colony of the importance of his plan, he described El Buraq as a dangerous allegory that stood for the spread of Islam and resistance to the French expansion. In Governor Ponty's words: "*En effet les sujets des deux images que M. Zaki déclara inoffensive ne me paraissent pas être de ceux que nous puissions considérer comme sans portée: le première notamment représentant le "baraq" sur lequel, d'après la légende, Mahomet, se rendit de la Mecque a Jérusalem puis monta jusqu'auprès d'Allah peut prêter à tous les commentaires possibles, et dans cet ordre d'idées, l'expérience nous a prouvé combien fertile était l'imagination des glossateurs du Coran quand il s'agit d'assurer la conversion des infidèles ou réchauffer le zèle des néophytes. Aux yeux de tous, cette figure allégorique planant au-dessus de l'univers dans un attrayant décor de mosquée et de minarets surmontés du croissant symbolique, qu'est elle auprès de populations de mentalité si preste sinon l'apothéose de l'islamisme? […] En un mot, ces images et toutes autres similaires à la rigueur inoffensives dans un milieu civilisé, deviennent fatalement séditieuses par l'usage que ne manqueront pas d'en faire, dans les conditions indiquées ci-dessous, les adversaires irréductibles de notre domination, marabouts ou anciens chefs déchus qui ne nous pardonnaient pas la suppression de l'esclavage et la substitution d'un régime de liberté et de justice a l'exploitation éhontée des masses par quelques privilégies. […] Aussi j'estime que des mesures radicales s'imposent dès lors qu'il s'agit d'une propagande politique, essayant de se donner libre cours dans le manqué de la religion, grâce à la diffusion parmi des populations ignorantes et par conséquent d'autant plus faciles à tromper de journaux gravures et publications de toutes natures dénaturant sciemment notre œuvre colonisatrice.*» (ANS 19G4, 12 November 1911, circular 2216; annex 2.4)

[66] Masmoudi, *La Peinture Sous Verre En Tunisie*, 11-12.

souwer should consider the possible influence of North African and Middle Eastern pictorial arts that predated or coincided with the arrival and circulation of chromolithographs in West Africa.

In another chromolithograph also collected in Senegal, the Arabic text identifies the sitter as Abd Kadir El Djilany (fig.2.7). No mention is made as to where or when this image was printed. Abd Kadir El Djilany (b. 1077 AD Iran - 1166 AD Iraq) was a Sufi Sheikh and the founder of the Qadiri Sufi order or Qadiriyya. By the fifteenth century, the Qadiriyya had distinct branches in North and East Africa, Spain, Turkey, and even India. The chromolithograph was copied and disseminated in glass-painting form across Senegal (fig.2.8). While on first inspection it may be surprising that this figure was popular in West Africa, Senegal has a large Sufi population and Abd Kadir El Djilany was treasured as one of the founders of Sufism. Furthermore, both the founder of the main Muslim brotherhoods, or *tariqa,*[67] in Senegal—i.e. Amadou Bamba and El-Hadji Malick Sy—had studied with Qadiriyya teachers.[68] The prominence of Sufism in Senegal may account for the circulation of El Djilany's portrait on paper and glass, which would have constituted an effective mediator between the faithful and God, while also reinforcing the legitimacy and lineage of their religious affiliation.

These are just two examples among many chromolithographs and glass paintings that exemplify the variety of visual material that was circulating in Senegal during this period.[69] Chromos were printed in Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Egypt and eventually Senegal too; aesthetically they included Christian, Sunnite, Shi'ite and Ottoman references.[70] While Senegal

[67] A *tariqa* is the term for a school or order of Sufism.
[68] Bamba was a disciple of Sheikh Saad Buh, a Qadiriyya leader.
[69] Other subjects include: the Virgin Mary, the sacrifice of Abraham, Abdou Zyd Hilali—an eleventh century leader in Tunisia— and Shi'ite images of Ali and his sons. Indeed, many of these images that had been printed in Syria and Lebanon addressed equally the local Arabic Shi'ite and Christian communities.
[70] Leichtman talks about "traveling Islam" as the movement of Muslims across borders but also the global circulation of religious knowledge whilst the Qu'ranic notion of *umma*, the "imagined community" of Muslims at large remains extremely powerful. Mara Leichtman, "Migration, War, and the Making of a Transnational Lebanese Shi'i Community in Senegal," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 3 (2010): 271.

is a majority Sunni country with a strong Sufi orientation, ninety-five percent of the Lebanese community is Shi'ite, with a small Christian component.[71] The sheer quantity of chromolithographs found in Senegal conveys the heterogeneity of these references and the blurring of boundaries between religious traditions. In this sense, Senegal successfully fostered the accommodation and adaptation of a great variety of images that went on to decorate private interiors in urban areas where they were used as potent votive images.

The study of the correspondence of the colonial administration and the visual material found in archives and private collections reveal that there was a vibrant market and growing demand for these images.[72] Analysis of chromolithography and glass-painting traditions in North Africa and Turkey forces us to consider the exchanges that were taking place between North and Sub-Saharan countries, and between Africa and the Middle East as a determining factor in the development of artistic practices in Senegal. By focusing on the circulation of visual material among Islamic countries as early as the late nineteenth century, it is possible to trace the role of glass painting in copying, framing and disseminating devotional and secular portraits.

Visualizing our leaders: photographs and glass paintings

The arrival of votive images in the form of chromolithographs and glass paintings into Senegal coincided with the founding of local Islamic brotherhoods. Visitors to Senegal will immediately recall portraits of religious leaders seen in virtually every taxi, street, home and screen saver (fig.2.9-10). Most commonly displayed are the portraits of Amadou Bamba, or Serigne Touba, the founder of the Mouride Sufi Brotherhood in Touba in 1883; and El-Hadji

[71] Ibid., 276.
[72] It is important to emphasize that here I am not undermining the overall colonial culture of censorship, as presented particularly by Ibrahima Thioub, however, I wish to put the spotlight on the circulation of material that was taking place, and move beyond the strict frame of surveillance. Thioub, "Savoirs Interdits En Contexte Colonial: La Politique Culturelle De La France En Afrique De L'ouest."

Malick Sy, the first caliph of the Tidianes[73] between 1902 and 1922 in the city of Tiwawone. By the 1910s, these Sufi brotherhoods were rooted in the territory with growing numbers of followers. Over time, Senegalese were less interested in images from the life of the Prophet or North African caliphs than in portraits of their own leaders.

While considerable research has been done on the provenance of Bamba's portrait, the history of this image remains shrouded in myth.[74] Allen and Mary Nooter Roberts suggest that this portrait reproduced a photo that was published for the first time in the 1917 *Études sur L'Islam au Sénégal* written by Paul Marty, a colonial officer who worked in Senegal and whose impact has not been fully assessed.[75] When I checked out this book at the ANS, the chapter on the Mourides was there, but the section on Bamba or the other *Cheikh* had been replaced with photocopies (fig.2.11). Only when I ordered the volume in New York was I able to see Bamba's portrait (fig.2.12). This publication included not only the photo of the Mouride leader and Ibra Fall, the leader of the Baay Fall as mentioned by the Roberts, but also that of El-Hadji Malick Sy, the founder of the Tijāniyya in Senegal (fig.2.13). This publication reproduced at least three of

[73] The Tijāniyya was founded in Algeria by Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815) in 1781. El Hadji Samba Amadou Diallo, "Exploring a Sufi Tradition of Islamic Teaching: Educational and Cultural Values among the Sy Tijāniyya of Tivaouane (Senegal)," *Social Compass* 58, no. 1 (2011): 28; David Robinson, "Malik Sy: Un Intellectuel Dans L'ordre Colonial Au Sénégal," *Islam et société au sud du Sahara* (1993).

[74] There has been discussion about the existence of other photos of Amadou Bamba. Gilles Le Ouzon argues that there was another postcard depicting Amadou Bamba on a horse (Gilles Le Ouzon, personal communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, 2012). In my archival research, I found that already in 1906 the colonial administration mentions the existence of a photo of Amadou Bamba (ANS 19G circular 10 mars 1906). During my interviews, while Senegalese were generally not familiar with Marty's publications, they regularly stressed the photo's exceptionality. The only reason why the photographer managed to fix Amadou Bamba's image on paper was because the latter had given his permission. Cheikh Samb, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014; Serigne Teïba Gueye, personal communication, Djourbel, Senegal, 2014.

[75] Paul Marty was born in 1882 in Boufarik a small village outside Algiers. Following an impressive military career in Morocco and Tunisia, in September 1912 he was attached to the Colonial Ministry and was sent to Dakar to advise the Lieutenant General on Muslim Affairs. He remained in the AOF until 1921. During this time he reached the top rank of military interpreters and was made *Chevalier d'Honneur*. When Marty arrived in Dakar, Governor Ponty was finishing the outline of his Muslim policy. Besides advising the French ministry, during his work in AOF Marty was a prolific writer on Islam. On Marty see: Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960*, 105-06; Jean Copans, *Les Marabouts De L'arachide: La Confrérie Mouride Et Les Paysans Du Sénégal* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988); "Jean Copans Répond. Les Chercheurs De La Confrérie Et La Confrérie Des Chercheurs. A Chacun Son Khalife Et Marx Pour Tous?," *Politique Africaine* 1, no. 4 (1981). For more details on the circulation of Marty's publications see: Robinson, "French 'Islamic' Policy and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Senegal," 135.

the portraits that can be found now virtually everywhere in Senegal and therefore must be considered the original source for all of these portraits.

But let's look closely at these images. They are both taken in the open air and do not seem to have been staged. These shots are in stark contrast with the other portraits of Senegalese sitters who were photographed in local studios and then published in Marty's volumes (fig.2.14). In those cases, the sitters are posing in the studio. In the case of Bamba's photo, Marty does not provide any caption or indication of who the photographer might have been.[76] Research at the ANS reveals that in the 1910s, French officers were monitoring the activities of the *marabouts* and as part of this endeavor they created individual named files, which were supposed to include their photographs.[77] In 1916, the new Governor of Senegal Raphaël Antonetti established a small fund specifically for Marty so that he could photograph each *marabout* for his book.[78] Nonetheless both portraits of Bamba and Malick Sy must have been taken before 1915, most likely around the early 1910s: the photo of Malick Sy was featured in an earlier volume published by Marty with the *Revue du Monde Musulman* in 1915-1916; whereas the photo of Bamba was taken in Djourbel, and therefore must have been made during his house arrest from 1912 to 1927.[79]

The photo of Malick Sy has been obviously manipulated (fig.2.15). While it is impossible

[76] The book published 45 photographs by different authors. In Volume One he acknowledges Lasselves as the photographer. Antoine Jean Martin Arthur Lasselves was the *Administrateur Colonial du Cercle de Diourbel*. In Volume Two a photo is attributed to the Noal Brothers. The two volumes also include studio photos, but they are unattributed. Paul Marty, *Études Sur L'islam Au Sénégal*, Collection De La Revue Du Monde Musulman (E. Leroux: Paris, 1917), Vol.1 233; Vol. 2 49.

[77] ANS 15G103 (annex 2.5)

[78] From the archival records it seems that the negatives existed, and were then developed by Wissini, a "Chinese" photographer in Rufisque. Collector Jean-Philippe Dedieu owns a self-portrait of Wissini. Erika Nimis mentions the existence of the studio "Dakar Photo" owned by Victor Wissin Benehoane, photographer who was originally from Taiwan who then moved to Ivory Coast. Nimis, *Photographes D'afrique De L'ouest: L'expérience Yoruba*, 123. It is not clear who took those photos, but most likely different photographers in the military *in loco*. (ANS 13G67 letter n. 642 12 May 1916.)

[79] Paul Marty, *L'islam En Mauritanie Et Au Sénégal*, vol. XXXI, Revue Du Monde Musulman (Paris: E. Leroux, 1915-1916), 369; Robinson, "The Murids: Surveillance and Collaboration," 199; 209.

to tell from Marty's printed version, it seems that the image had been retouched directly on the photograph rather than the negative. In this photo, El-Hadji Malick Sy is standing outdoors in Tiwawone, the Senegalese headquarters of the Tijāniyya. He is wearing his white *boubou*, a scarf (or *Kaala* in Wolof) covering his head. His right hand is holding an umbrella that was generally used as a protection from the sun. He is surrounded by his disciples who are staring at the photographer. It is difficult to ascertain if the photograph was taken for this publication, and then started to circulate, or vice versa; certainly, this portrait became part of the public domain not via mechanical reproductions, but instead via other media such as glass painting.

Figure 2.16 illustrates one of the oldest glass paintings to have been collected. It portrays Malick Sy in full figure standing in a courtyard. The glass painting mirrors the posture and dress of the original photo. The cloak is decorated with a golden thread with six small flowers—the same motif that we find stylized on the floor and the frame. Rather than being portrayed with his disciples flocked around him, the *marabout* is represented in the proximity of the sacred space of a mosque. The mosque is not however that of Tiwawone, as we know at the time the building was made in wood as Marty's publication testifies. Besides identifying the sitter, the Arabic inscription expresses a prayer to Malick Sy, who shall grant the viewer his blessings or *baraka*:

> *Tazkiratou mawlana Seydina* = Souvenir of our teacher, our leader
> *Elhadji Malick Sy* = El-Hadji Malick Sy
> *Nafa'a Allahou bi barkatihi* = May Allah grant us his *baraka*[80]

The popularity of this portrait is evident in the countless *souwer* that were produced after the original image (fig.2.17-20). Gradually, the composition, the figure's dress, and the background change. In these images some of which are now fading away, we see the same motifs being reworked and reinvented. In some instances the portrait has been reversed, revealing the

[80] I thank Mamadou Dia for the translation from Arabic into French.

technique of duplication that was employed for its creation. Figures 2.17 to 2.20 are just a few examples that stand for many others where the portrait is copied and updated—the reproduction never fully faithful to the original photograph, suggesting that the 1910 snapshot was not used as the master copy but that the copies were made from other copies themselves.

Portraiture and devotion: *baraka* and the index

If portraits had become integral to devotional practices in Senegal, what was their main function? How were they incorporated in daily practices, and was there a difference between hand-painted and mechanically reproduced ones? Since the late 1990s, Allan and Mary Roberts have written extensively on the role of religious images in Senegal, focusing mostly on Mouride visual culture. Following many years of fieldwork, the Robertses took up David Freedberg's challenge to study the relation between how images look and why they work, and produced a rich catalogue on the Mouride "refabulation of the urban space."[81] In their analysis of thousands of reinterpretations of the original photo of Amadou Bamba, they conclude that these images are sacred, and as such they "convey a blessing power called *baraka* (or *barké*)" a term that they translate as "aura."[82]

Barry Flood defines *baraka* as "the immaterial blessing that radiates from the bodies of prophets or saints in life or death or from objects associated with them. Typically *baraka* is absorbed through kissing, touching, or rubbing."[83] Flood's definition revolves around two main

[81] Allen F. Roberts and Mary Nooter Roberts, "A Saint in the City Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal," *African Arts* 35, no. 4 (2002); David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 135; Allen F. Roberts et al., *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal* (Los Angeles, Calif.: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 2003).
[82] Roberts and Roberts, "A Saint in the City Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal," 54.
[83] Finbarr Barry Flood, "Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam," in *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*, ed. Sally M. Promey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 461. I wish to thank Prof. Barry Flood for taking time to discuss with me definitions of *baraka*.

axes: materiality and mediation. Within his line of arguments, *baraka* is always ephemeral, and in order to operate it needs to be mediated by a physical object. The tension between *baraka*'s evanescence and its imperative to embodiment, points to its metamorphic quality. Joseph Chelhod warns against the urge to squeeze this force's potentials to fit within clear-cut limits, since one of its endemic qualities is that it does not have temporal or physical boundaries.[84] *Baraka* can travel across time and space, and during its journey, it can transform, dissolve or heighten, and in this sense it exists organically.

When asked to define *baraka*, Mouride *talibés* or disciples interviewed in Dakar, Touba and Djourbel between 2013 and 2014 described precisely this organic dimension of a concept that can be both reduced to its narrowest interpretation and stretched to encompass the secular realm.[85] Here I wish to report some of these interpretations, not so much to pin down a clear-cut definition, but rather to demonstrate the concept's vastness.[86]

Author: What is *baraka*?

- "It is the positive spiritual value attached to an object, a place or a word." Modou Lô[87]
- *"Baraka* is what we are after." (In Wolof: *Barké dañu koy sakou*) Cheikh Samb [88]
- *"Baraka* is all that comes from God and that is useful for our life. It is not something we touch; it is at the level of the heart." Elaj Fallilou Bousso [89]
- *"Barké* is what directed our steps here [to Djourbel]." Serigne Teïba Gueye [90]
- "[*Barké*] gives me strength so that there will not be difficulties on my way." (In Wolof:

[84] Joseph Chelhod, "Baraka Chez Les Arabs," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 148 (1955): 74; 82-83.
[85] Between 2013 and 2014, I conducted about ten trips to Touba, Dakar and Djourbel. In May 2014, in particular I interviewed various subjects specifically on definitions of *baraka* and understandings of the photograph of Amadou Bamba. This research was conducted with Prof. Z.S. Strother, Ibrahima Thiam and Ousmane Gueye who translated the interviews when necessary from Wolof into French. Their contribution was essential in trying to understand the importance and complexity of this term.
[86] I wish to thank Prof. Bachir Souleymane Diagne for his input in explaining this term. Besides pointing to the fact that the literature on this term is rather extensive, Prof. Diagne emphasized that in the Sufi tradition, the term will not be explained by offering a clear-cut definition, but in most cases by telling parables or allegories that explain how *baraka* works. Furthermore, in the Senegalese context specifically, *baraka* is associated with one's mother: it is the mother who passes on *baraka* to her children, and determines if they will be successful or not.
[87] Modou Lô, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[88] Cheikh Samb, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[89] Elaj Fallilou Bousso, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[90] Serigne Teïba Gueye, personal communication, Djourbel, Senegal, 2014.

gëne ma yokk doole ma jëg ba benn jafe-jafe du nekk sama kanam) Serigne Djigal[91]

For Modou Lô, a recent graduate student in sociology and economics now working in Touba, *baraka* is best identifiable when it embodies a physical object and its positive charge is discernible. Cheikh Samb, an archivist and a devout Mouride *talibé* in Touba, stressed instead the inquisitive dimension of his Sufi practice, whereby *baraka,* as a state of grace, is a goal to be pursued. In contrast, Serigne Teïba Gueye, the guardian of Amadou Bamba's relics in Djourbel, described *baraka* as a force that regulates the world and more specifically, is able to attract us to sacred spaces such as Djourbel, where Amadou Bamba had lived. Lastly, Elaj Fallilou Bousso, a *marabout* and a descendant of Amadou Bamba's mother, and Serigne Djigal, a businessman and intellectual based in Dakar, both emphasized *baraka*'s power to help disciples overcome obstacles.

Generally, God is understood as the primary sources of *baraka;* and yet, even within that understanding, the question of what possesses this force does not result in consensus. When asked where *baraka* could be found, the interviewees mentioned: the photo of Amadou Bamba, the soil of Touba, *any* representation of Amadou Bamba, the dress of one's *marabout*, and the photo of a relative.[92] While the latter was the only response that linked *baraka* to a strictly non-religious figure, it is significant to indicate how *baraka* can be employed within the secular realm to exemplify the protection that a loved one can exert.

In these responses, the variety of objects and simulacra with which *baraka* is associated, raise important questions about the relation between mimesis, surrogacy and the sacred. It goes beyond the purpose of this chapter to account for the entirety of this debate, however, it is essential to focus on the perceptions and receptions of the depiction of Amadou Bamba within

[91] Serigne Djigal, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2014

[92] It was the wife of the photographer Oumar Ka in Touba, who brought a photo of her deceased aunt who had so dearly taken care of her when she was little that prompted her to argue that that photo had *baraka.*

Senegal.[93] This discussion is important, as it can inform us as to how photographs are understood. Is photography seen as equally powerful as painting? Does one have more *baraka* than the other? And if that is the case, what grants more power to one rather than the other?

Typically in Islam, *baraka* is absorbed through physical contact; that is, by kissing, touching, or rubbing.[94] Flood has recently studied the sensory dimension of devotional practices, arguing that some but not all of these practices can be accommodated under the rubric of mimesis. Ingestions of fragments of sacred bodies for instance are motivated, according to Flood, by a quest to "become" rather than "imitate."[95] More generally however, an object's spiritual power is mediated through and locked in via an indexical chain of contact with the saint's body.[96] The Robertses, however, who are confronted with the mass production of mystical representations of Senegalese *marabouts*, state that *baraka* also exists in mechanically produced images. They push their argument further by stating that this aura "exists not only despite but in some sense *because of* infinite mechanical reproductions."[97]

When confronted with relics of Amadou Bamba, virtually the totality of the faithful who were interviewed during my research argued that those objects emanated *baraka*, precisely because of their physical proximity to the body of the Saint.[98] Those objects had been in contact with Bamba, and therefore were infused with his grace that could be absorbed by touching them. As the guardian of the Mosque of Djourbel Serigne Teïba Gueye explained, the objects touched

[93] This is a question that is discussed in more details by Prof. Barry Flood in one of his recent articles. Flood, "Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam."
[94] Ibid., 461.
[95] Ibid., 463.
[96] The only exception may be scrolls with representation of the Ka'aba—Islam's most sacred mosque in Mecca—that have been visibly consumed by excessive touching. Representations of the Ka'aba do not bear any indexical relation to the Ka'aba itself, and still in many occasions they have been perceived as a source of *baraka.* I wish to thank Prof. Flood for sharing his insights regarding this issue.
[97] Roberts and Roberts, "A Saint in the City Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal," 46.
[98] For a discussion of the different categories of relics see Flood, "Bodies and Becoming: Mimesis, Mediation and the Ingestion of the Sacred in Christianity and Islam," 469.

by Amadou Bamba—the mosque, his books, his luggage—are those that have most power. They have no equivalent.[99]

When the interviewees were presented with a reproduction of the famous photo of Amadou Bamba, most (but not all) believed that the image had *baraka*. The *marabout* and descendant of Amadou Bamba's mother, Elaj Fallilou Bousso, who received us in a room completely covered in photos, maintained that *any* representation that symbolized Bamba had *baraka.*[100] A more moderate approach was taken by the recent graduate student Modou Lô and intellectual Serigne Djigal, who stated that that the photo in itself *does not* have *barké;* only God and Amadou Bamba have it.[101] The photo is just a tool that directs the disciple's practice.

When confronted with a painted version of Amadou Bamba—like Gora Mbengue's glass painting (fig.2.21) —some interviewees said that it had *baraka*. Serigne Modou Bousso Gueye—a teacher and another descendant from the Bousso family—stated that "*la reproduction de la photo c'est la meme chose*."[102] The painting or the copy, *sotti* in Wolof, is equal to the "original" image of Bamba. Others however, were not happy with the ways in which it had been rendered. Cheikh Samb, an archivist in Touba, stated, "*Je sens que c'est pas Serigne Touba*:" he felt that it was not Serigne Touba.[103] Why? Because this glass painting was drawn freehand; the artist did not retain all details of the original black-and-white portrait.

Anyone familiar with Amadou Bamba would immediately recognize representations of the Saint mechanical or handmade. The devout Mouride—that is, someone who is used to meditating on the image of the Saint and is deeply invested in his icon—may distinguish "good"

[99] Serigne Teïba Gueye, personal communication, Djourbel, Senegal, 2014.
[100] Elaj Fallilou Bousso, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[101] Serigne Djigal, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2014; Modou Lô, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[102] Serigne Modou Bousso Gueye, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[103] Cheikh Samb, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.

from “bad” reproductions. “The sandals have never been red!” *talibé* Cheikh Same Niang exclaimed, shocked in seeing Gora Mbengue’s libertine representation.[104] The glass painter not only reversed the way in which the Saint wore his scarf—he noticed—but represented both hands, both feet *and* added red sandals. To many interviewees in Touba, these departures from the photograph were not acceptable and generated some level of resentment.

While a mystery in terms of its history, the photo of Bamba is studied by his disciples with great devotion. The fact that one hand and one foot are not visible in the original version is for some a signifier of the mystic quality of the sitter and his portrait. In this sense, the difference between a “good” and a “bad” representation is established in relation to the iconographic qualities of the master portrait. What may upset some followers does not hinge on who produced the image—Chinese factories vs. an enlightened Mouride artist—nor does it strictly rely on the nature of the medium—photography vs. painting—but rather on its iconic accuracy.

In a recent conference paper, Flood studied the proliferation of representations of one the most important relics of the Prophet Muhammad, his sandal.[105] Starting from schematic images traced from the original relic, the distinctive silhouette circulated from Morocco to India in a chain of contact that maintained the efficacious blessing of the sandal. In tracing this trajectory, Flood mentions that at some point, one of these devotional texts where the sandal had been traced was photographed. The resulting photograph was perceived as being indexically related to the original image and therefore transmitting a legitimate source of *baraka*. In the Senegalese case, glass paintings were often also traced from the original photograph. However, both portraits of Bamba and Sy took a life of their own, less concerned with the necessity of the

[104] Cheikh Same Niang, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[105] Finbarr Barry Flood, "Sanctified Sandals: Relics of the Prophet in an Era of Technological Reproduction," in *Bettman Lecture Series* (Columbia University 2014).

indexical authentication that Flood discusses in the case of the sandal of the Prophet.[106]

Photography's indexical nature is often assumed particularly in the modernist discourse.[107] Recently, scholars such as Z. S. Strother have questioned and challenged interpretations that lock photography in an indexical relation to reality.[108] Strother has complicated the universality of this argument by studying local uses of photography in the African continent.[109] The understanding of the photograph as a "deposit of the real," she explains, "requires technical education and is never experienced in the moment with the physical immediacy of leaving a footprint in the sand."[110] Strother provides examples from the Pende people in the Congo where the photo cannot be used "to steal the soul" precisely because it is not understood as having an indexical relation to the subject.

The reception of the Senegalese portraits herein considered suggests that original and reproduced images possessed *baraka* because of their iconic rather than indexical properties.[111]

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[106] In an email exchange Prof. Flood clarifies that "there are clearly cases in which images are treated as conduits for *baraka* because of their iconic qualities, with no indexical claims made." If the parameters of what can transmit *baraka* were much broader in "popular" practices, the ulama (or religious elite of scholars at the top of the sectarian hierarchy) tried to control and circumscribe the cult of relics "by insisting on the unique ability of indexicality to invest the image with *baraka*." Barry Flood, email exchange, November 2014.

[107] Rosalind Krauss writes: "For photography is an imprint or transfer of the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers in a manner parallel to that of fingerprints or footprints or the rings of water that cold glasses leave on table." Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, ed. Rosalind E. Krauss (Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT, 1985), 110. The original definition of the index comes from Charles Peirce: "An Index stands for its object by virtue of a real connection with it, or because it forces the mind to attend to that object." Charles S. Peirce et al., *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, 2 vols. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1992), 14.

[108] See also Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, 194-99; 215; Peter Geimer, "Image as Trace: Speculations About an Undead Paradigm," *Differences: A journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2007).

[109] Strother, "'A Photograph Steals the Soul:' the History of an Idea," 196-202. Pinney also questions the validity of this interpretation of photography in India. As discussed in Chapter One, the photo historian argues that the indexical interpretation of photography was introduced by the colonial administration in the earlier phase of its history. Eventually, the power of images was understood as being triggered or activated by the owner himself: "what gives the images power is the relationship that the devotee comes to have with the deity mediated through the image." Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, 108; 10-11

[110] Strother, "'A Photograph Steals the Soul:' the History of an Idea," 200.

[111] Peirce offers the following definition of the icon: "An *icon* is a sign which stands for its object because as a thing perceived it excited an idea naturally allied to the idea that object would excite. Most icons, if not all, are *likeness* of

If it is true that **"**no visible images reach us unmediated" and therefore different supports necessarily engender distinctive responses, within this context iconicity has precedence over the materiality of the portrait.[112] To use the words of one of the interviewees, Serigne Djigal, "*ñüro moo gëne am solo:*" resemblance is the most important element in the reproduction of the portrait.[113]

In the multiple transformations of Malick Sy's and Bamba's portraits—what Eduardo Cadava terms the "itinerancy of the photograph" —mechanical reproductions and manual duplicates tend to be seen as equally effective and valid.[114] This equation between mechanical reproductions and manual duplicates of reality challenges the Western canonical schisms between original and copy, and forces us to continue to look for new ways of understanding the relationships between medium, image and body.

From the picture plane to the frame and back

Glass painting did not remain the domain of the sacred. As photography became increasingly popular and photographic prints covered the interiors of the most prestigious homes, glass painters were commissioned to produce glasses *ad hoc* that would frame those prints. Customers would choose their motifs for specific portraits and could also commission a glass painter to re-do all the frames to decorate a room.[115] Yet, as portraiture expanded as a genre, references to Islamic aesthetics re-surfaced.

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their objects. A photograph is an icon, usually conveying a flood of information." Peirce et al., *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, 13.

[112] Pinney found a similar dynamic in India where faithful are not interested where images are made, rather what they can do. Pinney, *'Photos of the Gods:' The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India*, 190.

[113] Serigne Djigal, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2014.

[114] Cadava et al., *The Itinerant Languages of Photography*.

[115] Serigne N'Diaye, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, 2014. For a more detailed discussion on the practice of framing photos, see Chapter 3.

Figure 2.22 illustrates what is probably one of the oldest glass paintings framing a photograph to have been collected. While the piece remains undated, the actual photograph can help us situate this piece. By comparing the portrait's hairstyles, textile motifs, and fashion trends with similar portraits, it is possible to establish a solid timeline. In a postcard from the Metropolitan Collection (fig. 2.23), two women present themselves using very similar conventions to those employed in the glass painting: the sitters are posing in the photographer's studio with their hands resting on the knees; the Moroccan *babouches* pointing in opposite directions call attention to the precious textile or *pagne tisse* that alongside their headdress (the *jeere* or *pof*) reveal their social rank. The uniformity of codes in these two images indicates a similarity in status and a consolidation in portrait practices among the Senegalese elite. My attribution of the second image to the French photographer Louis Hostalier as discussed in Chapter One situates both portraits near the end of the nineteenth-early twentieth century.

Although the portrait may be the central element in the glass painting, it occupies less than one fourth of the total picture plane, which is organized into two registers: a rectangular field in the upper section features two large birds facing each other; the lower part is divided into three smaller sections with the central portrait crowned by two large plants. A golden frame demarcates and isolates these four planes following a strictly symmetrical arrangement. While previous specialists such as Bouttieux have interpreted these motifs as derivative of a European aesthetics I was able to complicate this frame of reference by studying glass-painting traditions in North Africa.[116]

Figure 2.24 and 2.25 belong to the Tunisian tradition of glass painting. Coeval to the Senegalese example, the compositional structure is modular with two main horizontal registers, a

[116] Bouttiaux, Jawerbaum, and Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale., *Senegal Behind Glass: Images of Religious and Daily Life*, 39.

larger one in the upper part, and a triptych in the lower section. In these glass paintings, not only is the compositional strategy remarkably analogous, but the iconographic material is also comparable with a recurrence of plants, vases and birds which were common decorative elements in a pan-Mediterranean late Ottoman aesthetic.[117] Nonetheless, on close inspection, we can note that the birds on the Senegalese glass painting are not simply painted; rather, they traced from parrots that had originally been drawn using Arabic calligraphy (fig.2.26).

In the case of Malick Sy's portrait, geometric and floral patterns were used as ornamental boundaries around the portrait; the organizational and compositional attributes have no referent outside the object. In this combined work, however, the relation between frame and picture changes because the artist paints animated elements. Covering almost three times the area of the photograph, the painted surface has a determining impact on the viewer's experience. The bright and unmodulated yellows, reds, greens and blues contrast with the black and white of the photograph, creating a forceful visual staccato.

The intentionality behind rendering the frame so vividly recalls Oleg Grabar's argument regarding the function of decoration.[118] In *Mediation of the Ornament*, Grabar states that ornament is an agent that is *not* logically necessary to the perception of a visual message but without which the process of understanding would be more difficult. Understood as an intermediary between object and viewer, ornament is seen as a necessary catalyst that amplifies on the work's ability to generate pleasure.[119]

In analyzing how these intermediaries work, Grabar suggests that vegetation, unique from text, geometric shapes and architecture, implies life. In this case, the glass' transparency

[117] I thank Prof. Flood for clarifying this reference to the Ottoman aesthetic.
[118] Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), xxiii-xxiv.
[119] Ibid., 230.

and the photo's black-and-white tones are made to vibrate against the vivid colors and natural elements found in the frame. Yet, while for Grabar the visual hierarchy between the different constituents is unwavering— "the ornament from nature […] always leads elsewhere than towards itself" —in the Senegalese case, these frames appear as the artists' first timid step towards an appropriation of the entire surface.[120]

By the 1950s, the formula of photo behind glass had become very popular. While birds─ in this case peacocks─remain a favorite motif, the sitters' body language and fashions change dramatically (fig.2.27). Rather than presenting statuary full-figures in perfectly matched outfits, the camera is zoomed over the female face and lends her cinematic expressivity. Joined hands framing the face or crossed arms resting on the chair became the new poses to strike in the most popular photo studios in Dakar and Saint Louis. In these compositions, the photographic portraits become increasingly small while the painted surface expands over the glass.

In another composite work, a painted glass frames a central photo (fig.2.28). Two aspects make this *souwer* unique: the identity of sitter and photographer, and the relation between the photograph and painted background. While both the glass and vintage print are unsigned and undated, any Senegalese would immediately recognize the sitter as Serigne Moustapha Sy Djamil, the eldest son of Ababacar Sy, the *Khalife Général des Tidianes* between 1922 and 1957. By finding other shots that were part of the same series, I was able to attribute it to the photographer Salla Casset.[121] Together with his brother Mama Casset, Salla was among the most popular photographers in Dakar in the 1950s and 60s as we will see in Chapter Four. Interestingly, the Casset brothers, who ran separate studios, were commissioned by at least three

[120] Ibid., 224.
[121] Enrico Mascelloni and Sarenco, *Photodakar: Le Star Della Fotografia Senegalese* (Verona: Parise, 2000).

dignitaries of the Sy family for portraits in their studios in Dakar and in the sitters' private abodes in Tiwawone.

Even though the original motivations behind these shots are difficult to discover—were these portraits for private consumption, or to distribute to the Tidiane disciples? —it is striking that religious leaders who had to distinguish themselves as role models were habitual consumers of photography, and loyal clients of the most fashionable photographers of their times—the Casset brothers. A Tidiane follower would probably explain their guides' appreciation of studio photography as an index of their modernity.[122] The Tidianes, whose headquarters are in the city of Tiwawone, take pride in their essentially urban identity that is opposed to the rural one of Mouridism, which was founded and developed in the Baol region in the interior of Senegal.[123] While this explanation may be a contentious one, this portrait hints at the religious leaders' appropriation of photography. If the first photo of El-Hadji Malick Sy had been taken as part of France's attempt to document Muslim leaders in the 1910s, by the 1950s when Moustapha Sy Djamil's photo was taken, photography had become a popular medium—even among the prestigious Sy family.[124]

Let us return to the composition of the *souwer* (fig.2.28). Compared to the previously discussed framed photographs, the similarity in motifs will be immediately apparent: the central photographic portrait is crowned by two birds and flanked by matching plants creating a strongly symmetrical composition. The overall equilibrium between the parts—figure and ground—is however different: in this case, the painter capitalizes on the glass surface to extend the space of

[122] I thank Prof. Bachir Diagne for discussing this issue with me.
[123] For an overview of the city of Tiwawone and its dwellers see: Atoumane Ndiaye Doumbia, *Tivaouane En Images: Essai Sur L'histoire De La Ville Depuis 1886*, 1st ed. (Dakar: At the author, 2010).
[124] If the Mourides are known to wear or display an image of their guide, the Tidiane will rarely wear an image of their leader, as they are less invested in the use of images in their religious practice. Since the 1980s the Mourides have fully embraced the possibilities offered by the latest technologies and other brotherhoods have tended to follow their lead.

the photographic studio where the sitter was captured. The anonymous artist further alludes to a three-dimensional space by making the flowers and peacocks part of the studio décor. The painted glass exceeds its purpose to exclusively decorate and protect the actual photographic print; it creates an architectural space that envelops the sitter. No longer a frame, the *souwer* complements the photograph functioning almost as a backdrop.

As studio photography reached its climax in the 1950s and 60s, glass painters too were broadening their practice, profiting from the popularity of portraiture. Artists such as Babacar Lô and Gora Mbengue did not confine their work to reproducing icons of religious leaders or framing photographs: they too experimented with the genre of secular portraiture to a certain extent competing with photographers. In 1953 Daba Segou commissioned her portrait from Babacar Lô, one of the most popular glass painters in Dakar (fig.2.29) in occasion of the baptism, in Wolof *ngente*, of one of her sons. Daba was the daughter of the brother of Amadou Bamba, Cheikh Mbacke who had been sent to Segou in Mali by the French administration and retained the appellative "Segou."[125] Her affiliation with the Mbacke family automatically made her an important social figure.[126]

In her portrait, Daba is looking straight at the viewer. Her pose, with chin resting on crossed hands, allows her to exhibit her precious jewelry. On her forehead, golden "*libidor*" (from the French "*Louis d'or*:" coins introduced in the seventeenth century) linger and brighten her gaze. The shining metal echoes in the elaborate bracelets and earrings framing her oval face. The hairstyle, the *Nguuka* that was in vogue in the 1930s, identifies her as a mature woman.[127] In the background, the grey folds of a tent recall the backdrop of the studio setting. And indeed, the

[125] Modou Lô, personal communication, Touba, Senegal, 2014.
[126] Within Mouride visual culture, it is possible to find other popular representations of female figures such as the mother of Amadou Bamba, Mame Diarra Bousso and other wives, sisters or daughters of descendants of Bamba.
[127] Fatou Siga Niang, *Reflets De Modes Et Traditions Saint-Louisiennes* (Dakar: C.A.E.C. Khoudia Editions, 1990), 38.

pose is one common in photographic portraiture. Similarly to Malick Sy's *souwer*, this image also started to circulate and was copied many times—Daba Segou becoming the elegant Senegalese woman *par excellence.*[128]

When interviewed, Babacar Lô stated that he had painted the portrait by looking at his patron.[129] More common among his colleagues, portraits would be based on photographic prints that were produced *ad hoc* for private commissions or in larger numbers for the market, as in the case of the portrait of Cheikh Ahmed Tidiane Sy (fig.2.30). Once again, the composition betrays the hallmarks of studio photography: the sitter is captured at bust-length as he confidently poses for the camera. With his head slightly tilted, he stares into the distance.[130] The dominant dark tones of his elegant suit are brightened by his colorful tie and glasses whose colors—yellow, red and green—recall the Senegalese flag. As his name suggests, Cheikh Ahmed Tidiane Sy also belonged to the Sy family of Tiwawone and has filled the role of *Khalife Général des Tidianes* since 2013. Previously Cheikh Tidiane Sy was an intellectual and an active figure in the political arena, first as an opponent to President Senghor and then as Ambassador in Egypt from the 1960s.[131] He is known for his modern taste: he collects contemporary Senegalese art, writes poems, and during his sermons at the mosque would reference films, Voltaire and Rousseau. Historian Mamadou Diouf argues that Tidiane Sy became the symbol of modern Islam, "engaged, dynamic, able to dialogue equally with the Western culture (Senghor and his negritude) or with

[128] By this time it was common to find in the market portraits of famous or fashionable people both as glass paintings and photographs. The urban clientele could buy these portraits for gifts and to decorate their homes.
[129] Babacar Lô argued that Daba Segou asked him to do a portrait in occasion of a baptism in 1953. Years later, Renaudeau had found this portrait in Kaolack, in broken condition, and brought it back to him. Then Lô replicated that portrait himself for his clientele. (Babacar Lô, personal communication, Guédiawaye, Senegal, 2013)
[130] During my research I have been told that the original photo still exists, but I have never been able to come across one.
[131] Diallo, "Exploring a Sufi Tradition of Islamic Teaching: Educational and Cultural Values among the Sy Tijāniyya of Tivaouane (Senegal)," 33.

the anti-brotherhood Islamic culture" (like the first Prime Minister Mamadou Dia).[132] According to Diouf, this particular painting played a crucial role in the establishment of this contested and charming public figure.[133]

Since the 1930s, glass painters had slowly shifted and expanded the focus of their production by working with secular themes that framed vintage prints and echoed tenets of photographic portraiture. The close analysis of composite works against portraits on glass challenges the understanding of *souwer* as exclusively decorative; rather, it exposes the medium's evolution as inspired by other aesthetic lexicons such as photographic portraiture. As glass painting flirted with other media such as photography, the long-lasting and far-reaching impact of the introduction and spread of Islam cannot be overlooked or underestimated. From the framing devices painted on glass, to the practice of portraying members of important religious families, the study of *souwer* provides clues as to the rising popularity of portraiture in Senegal. The inexpensive quality of glass, along with its usefulness for tracing and reproducing images turned modest support into a prolific art form that accommodated Senegalese demands to visualize their religious leaders and loved ones.

Conclusion

By the 1910s, French West Africa had witnessed an unprecedented circulation of images through its territory, as AOF Governor William Ponty documented in his letters. This

[132] Diouf, "Islam: Peinture Sous Verre Et Idéologie Populaire," 35-36.

[133] The blurring between photograph and glass painting poses a question regarding the interaction between photographers and glass painters. It is crucial to consider that two métiers were notably distinct. Glass painters generally belonged to the cast of the artisans and, at the time, were at the bottom of the social ladder. Conversely, photographers were highly regarded until technological advancement allowed almost anyone to be a photographer—as early as the 1970s. Photographers rarely worked with one glass painter alone. Indeed, those who were responsible for producing the painted glasses had little interaction with those who took the photos. Glass painters were generally located in the market where they had boutiques. As well, glass painters were often asked to visit the customer's home to prepare their work there *ad hoc*. It is then a rather recent development to have glass painters with studios in their homes, and signing their works as Gora Mbengue and Babacar Lô did.

phenomenon is particularly salient in a country such as Senegal where traditions of portraiture had not previously existed. By the 1880s, portraits were produced locally in the form of *cartes-de-visite* and cabinet prints as discussed in Chapter One. Those images were nonetheless commissioned and consumed by a very small segment of the local population—the elite living in urban centers such as Dakar and Saint Louis. While Islam has often been blamed for the development of an essentially aniconic art, in this chapter I sought to demonstrate that in Senegal the opposite was the case. The introduction of devotional images at the turn of the century into the French colony from North Africa, the Middle East and Europe not only popularized portraiture, but triggered and cultivated a local taste for images. Through Islam, Senegalese appropriated media such as glass painting, employed icons in their religious practices, developed new formal strategies visible in the composite works, and lastly, approached images according to their ability to mediate *baraka*.

By studying the spread of these images across media—from chromos, to photographs to glass paintings—this chapter considered the interference—both theoretical and formal—between media whose histories and uses overlapped between the 1910s and 60s in Senegal. Photo and art historians such as Stephen Bann have written extensively on the interaction between painting, printmaking and photography in the nineteenth century, revealing the dialectic relation between these technologies that coexisted with, rather than supplanted, one another.[134] Like Bann, this chapter shifts the emphasis from the canonical opposition between original and copy to the fecundity of the process of reproduction. These practices are no longer seen as mutually exclusive but as parallel and overlapping. This flexibility allows us to track the transfer of images from one medium to another, as in the case of the migration of Malick Sy's portrait from the photograph taken by the colonial administration as part of their surveillance, to Paul Marty's

[134] Bann, *Parallel Lines: Printmakers, Painters and Photographers in Nineteenth-Century France*.

printed publication, to votive glass paintings. This trajectory recognizes the unstable meaning of images that lack any predictable path, as the relation between photographer, photographed, viewer and image changes.[135]

The symbiotic relation between chromolithography, photography and glass painting in Senegal suggests an equivalence between mechanical reproductions and manual duplicates of reality that challenges the image's essential authenticity and originality. Within this chain of reproducibility, the portrait's significance and efficacy, or *baraka*, is granted by its iconic quality rather than its indexical relation to the sitter. Far from arguing that customers could not tell the difference between a glass painting and a photograph, or that they did not have preferences towards one or the other, this chapter wishes to put the spotlight on the precedence of representation over the perceived authenticity of the image. In this system, newer and typically larger reproductions tend to replace older and smaller vintage prints: the materiality of the object being secondary to the figuration of the sitter. If art historians of the avant-garde suggested that modernism is a function of what we could call the discourse of originality, then already by the 1910s, the Senegalese seem to have embraced the nature of the photograph as inherently multiple and in constant transformation.[136]

[135] Similar to Azoulay, Hans Belting in this sense argues that pictures "do not exist by themselves, but they happen; they take place whether they are moving images (where this is so obvious) or not." Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 137; Belting, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology."
[136] Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, ed. Rosalind E. Krauss (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), 162.

CHAPTER THREE

"*Photographers Unknown*:"
Amateur Practices in Interwar Senegal

The most prolific and eclectic artist of the century: *Photographer Unknown.*

Mia Fineman, *Other Pictures* (2000)[1]

A woman is sitting comfortably on the floor (fig.3.1). With her legs crossed, she looks at us from a slightly higher vantage point. Probably using a Rolleiflex camera, the photographer is in front of her also seated on the floor looking down into his viewfinder.[2] Holding the camera at his waist, the photographer chooses an unusual low angle that subtly deforms the sitter, magnifying her presence. The pyramidal composition enhances her gravitas. Besides her staggering beauty, the viewer cannot help but notice the two walls behind her crammed with *photo-cartes* and dozens of smaller prints. The photographer's careful framing allows us to look straight at these photographs. Some are deliberately attached at diagonal angles on a woven panel; others, slightly bigger, are framed and suspended across the corner, facing the camera at a straight angle.

Writing about a collection of snapshots from the Thomas Walther collection, the Metropolitan Museum Photo Curator Mia Fineman celebrates the most prolific artist of the

[1] Mia Fineman, ed. *Other Pictures: Anonymous Photographs from the Thomas Walther Collection*, 1st ed. (Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000), 136.

[2] The first Rolleiflex was introduced in 1929 by the German company Franke & Heidecke. It was the first medium format roll-film camera—often a 6x6. Often also called twin-lens reflex camera (TLR), this model had two objective lenses of the same focal length. One lens is the photographic objective, while the second is used for the viewfinder system, which is usually viewed from above at waist level.

twentieth century: the amateur photographer, whose name is doomed to be forgotten. Alfred Stieglitz discouraged amateur photographers from considering themselves artists. He cautioned, "Don't believe you became an artist the instant you received a gift Kodak on Xmas morning."[3] Against this view, Fineman defends photography's nature as legitimately promiscuous. We ought to embrace amateur practice, because "genius is something that happens to people."[4]

Alongside other portraits that likewise feature backgrounds with galleries of other photos, this picture is part of a series that was produced by an amateur from Saint Louis during the interwar period. The profile of the author, as someone who enjoyed taking pictures in his free time, is one of the few details we know about these images—the rest remaining "a secret about a secret" to use Diane Arbus's words.[5] Adjoining Fineman's league of *Photographers Unknown,* this series has intrigued collectors and specialists: who is the author? Why would the sitter choose to pose in front of these photographs?[6] How can we explain this "blizzard of photos"?[7] This corpus captivates us because it is one of the rare collections produced by an African amateur before the 1970s—that is, before photography had become a cheap commodity.

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[3] Fineman, *Other Pictures: Anonymous Photographs from the Thomas Walther Collection*, 138.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 140.
[6] The first to write about this series was Frédérique Chapuis in *Revue Noire.* Years later various scholars have researched this series including Bajorek and Allan Roberts (Allen Roberts, email exchange 2013). Chapuis, "The Pioneers of Saint-Louis."; Jennifer Bajorek, "Of Jumbled Valises and Civil Society: Photography and Political Imagination in Senegal," *History and Anthropology* 21, no. 4 (2010).
[7] The phrase "blizzard of photographs" was originally used by Siegfried Kracauer in *Mass Ornament* as he describes the overwhelming production of images that may incite indifference Siegfried Kracauer and Thomas Y. Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 58. The same phrase has been quoted by innumerable scholars writing on photography and film including Eduardo Cadava and Mary Ann Doane Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light : Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), xxvii; Mary Ann Doane, "Temporality, Storage, Legibility: Freud, Marey, and the Cinema," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (1996): 313. Most recently MoMA curator Quentin Bajac used this phrase to account for the overwhelming production of images in the contemporary period. Bajac, "A Blizzard of Photographs.". I will return to this term later on in the chapter.

"In our age there is no work of art that is looked at so closely as a photograph of oneself, one's closest relatives and friends, one's sweetheart."[8] The German art historian Alfred Lichtwark wrote this passage in 1907. Indeed, as art historian Benjamin Buchloh reminds us, snapshots served scholars, as well as countless artists such as Gerhard Richter, as a "a point from which the reflection on the relationship between photography and historical memory would originate."[9] He continues, "it is as though photography's oscillating ambiguity, as a dubious agent simultaneously enacting and destroying mnemonic experience, could at least be fixed for one moment by situating the image in an analogue to the mnemonic imprint of the family relation itself." [10] In other words, snapshots that are often disregarded as "banal," can actually underscore the significance of photography and its link to our past, present and future.

All of the portraits discussed in Chapters One and Two were taken by professional photographers in their studios or in front of their signature backdrops. They circulated as *cartes-de-visite,* postcards or cabinet prints. By the 1910s, new genres such as *photo-cartes* and snapshot photography became fashionable attesting to the increased popularity of portraiture. Following an introductive discussion on the genre of *photo-cartes,* this chapter explores photographic practices outside the formal space of the photographic studio: it considers amateur photographers and their snapshots, putting the spotlight on two series produced between the 1910s and 40s by unidentified photographers from Saint Louis. One was *métis,* that is, descendant of a mixed European and Senegalese ancestry; the other was Wolof, the dominant ethnic group in Senegal. Unlike earlier photographers, these two amateurs took pictures during their leisure time. They did not work within the formalized space of the studio. They did not

[8] Alfred Lichtwark quoted in Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," 520.
[9] In *Die Photographie*, for instance Kracauer discusses the photo of his grandmother Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's "Atlas": The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (1999): 138; Kracauer and Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, 56-57.
[10] Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's "Atlas": The Anomic Archive," 138.

frame their sitters against signature backdrops. Rather, they walked with their cameras in and out of their homes, through the cityscape, using these fortuitous locations as *their* backdrops.

In the late 1990s, the French publishing house Revue Noire included some of these works in their anthologies for the first time alongside one article by Chapuis.[11] Besides that short article, the literature on this material—and on snapshot photography in Africa more generally—is virtually non-existent. Most of the content and images discussed in this Chapter are drawn from my two-year research in Senegal. There, I conducted hundreds of interviews across the country and worked with local collectors and photographers documenting the histories of these objects, some of which have entered international collections such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The chapter expands our understanding of photography in Africa by tracing these amateurs' movements back and forth from public to private space, from the cityscape to intimate interiors—two fields whose boundaries are porous and yet delineate the contours of the modern subject.[12] In these spaces the photographic portrait not only emphasized community ideals of beauty and conduct but relied on conventions that celebrated the autonomous individual.[13]

Incidentally, in the 1910s and 20s Senegal witnessed a major political transition. In 1912, *Les Jeunes Sénégalais* founded the first modern political party in francophone Africa.[14] In 1914, Blaise Diagne[15] was elected to the French National Parliament, becoming the first black African

[11] Chapuis, "The Pioneers of Saint-Louis."
[12] The development of notions of leisure and the domestic run parallel to the history of photo. For a general overview see: Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, 117.
[13] On beauty, photography and identity see: Mustafa Hudita, "Portraits of Modernity: Fashioning Selves in Senegalese Popular Photography," in *Images and Empires Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. Paul Stuart Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 183; 91.. On this regards, photo historian Baker writes: "portrait photography was inextricably linked to the rise of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois subjectivity. As these classes rose in power during the nineteenth century, photography provided the increasingly democratic, mass representations that the nature of their newly acquired social status demanded" George Baker, "Photography between Narrativity Ans Stasis: August Sender, Degeneration, and the Decay of the Portrait," *October* 76 (1996): 103.
[14] François Manchuelle, "Assimilés Ou Patriotes Africains? Naissance Du Nationalisme Culturel En Afrique Française (1853-1931) " *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 35, no. 138/139 (1995): 334.
[15] Yet, W. E. B. Du Bois argued "Diagne is a Frenchman who is accidentally black" ibid., 333.

elected in Senegal to represent his compatriots in France. Whilst enjoying a privileged status within *la Grande France* since the nineteenth century, in the mid-1910s black Africans replaced the French and *métis* elite as arbiters of local politics. They fought against the colonizers' idea that *les originaires* had to accept the French civil code and French culture in order to be French. If there were doubts and ambiguities regarding the status of the *originaires*, by 1916 they were not only voters but citizens.[16] This *prise de conscience*, which at once demanded political equality and cultural autonomy, signaled the beginning of modern Senegalese politics, a trajectory that reached its climax with the declaration of independence in 1960.

As the residents of Saint Louis struggled to "assimilate and not be assimilated" to use the language of Senegal's first president Léopold Sédar Senghor, they built a new form of urban civility.[17] I argue that snapshot photography became one of the most effective tools to shape these new identities. These snapshots delineate the birth of new subjectivities defined by their activities in the intimate interiors of their home and outside in the public space.

On Snapshots

When I talk about snapshot photography, I follow Catherine Zuromskis's loose definition. She describes snapshots as "everyday sentimental photographs generally taken by amateurs most often with automated portable cameras."[18] A subset of the larger field of vernacular photography, it does not include old tintype portraits and mass-produced picture postcards. The origin is

[16] Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton, New Jersey; Oxfordshire, England: Princeton University Press, 2014), 6-7; Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial," 390.
[17] Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Vues Sur L'afrique Noire Ou Assimiler, Non Être Assimilé," in *Liberté 1: Négritude Et Humanisme* ed. Léopold Sédar Senghor (Paris: Seuil, 1964).
[18] Catherine Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images* (Cambridge, MA; London, England: The MIT Press, 2013), 8.

associated with the technical development led by Kodak.[19] Starting in the 1880s, photographic cameras, which had previously been heavy, expensive and required technical knowledge to operate, became portable, relatively cheap and automated.[20] Needless to say, the genre can accommodate a wide variety of images, from the quickly shot, to the more staged photos that border on portraiture. For the purpose of this chapter, however, it is more important to establish a clear distinction between studio photographers considered in Chapter One and the two amateurs in Saint Louis. The informality of their practice and the intimate quality of many of their works mark a clear distinction with practices that had preceded them.

The trajectory of the snapshot to a large extent mirrors that of photography in its struggle to be accepted as an art *tout court.* Geoffrey Batchen argued that "snapshots are to the history of photography, as photography is to the history of art."[21] In this venture to belong to an "official" history of photography, snapshots have paradoxically served some of the leading scholars in their search for "what Photography was in itself."[22] In 1965, Pierre Bourdieu studied family snapshots to conclude that as a middlebrow art, photography records and reinforces social integration.[23] In 1979, Roland Barthes's intuition regarding photography's evidentiary function sprang from looking at his late mother's Winter Garden Photograph. Her photo, that he does not include because to us it would be nothing but an indifferent picture he says, provides him the *evidence*

[19] Among others, West wrote extensively on Kodak and particularly its marketing process. She argues that it created a new desire for photography. Kodak taught amateurs to apprehend their experiences and memories as objects of nostalgia; through photography they could organize and erase it. Kodak pursed domestic photo of all traces of sorrow and death. They exploited leisure, childhood, fashion antiques and narrative. Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, Cultural Frames, Framing Culture (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1-3.
[20] The introduction of dry plates for instance was one of the elements of portability that had an immediate influence upon the development of amateur photography. Alexander Black, "The Amateur Photographer," in *Photography: Essays and Images: Illustrated Readings in Teh History of Photography* ed. Beaumont Newhall (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1980), 149.
[21] Geoffrey Batchen, "Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn," *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (2008): 121.
[22] Barthes quoted in *Photography Degree Zero: Reflections on Roland Barthes's Camera Lucida*, 12.
[23] Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990).

that she "had been there."[24] While leading photo historians have written about these types of works, the literature on this specific genre has expanded only in the past thirty years.[25] In mapping the historiography of the snapshot, Pierre Bourdieu's and Rosalind Krauss's dispute on the snapshot will function as compass and as a starting point.

Published in 1965, Bourdieu's *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* situates the snapshot—and photography more broadly—as an "*art moyen*" whose function is that of recording and reinforcing social integration.[26] The sociologist describes a snapshot of the couple on their honeymoon in front of the Eiffel Tower. The image is just one example that reveals the *social* need that urges us to release the shutter. For Bourdieu, popular photography constantly seeks to "consecrate the unique encounter" between a person and an exceptional place: "the occasion of the journey (honeymoon) solemnizes the places travelled through, and the most solemn among them solemnize the occasion of the journey."[27] Even without looking at Bourdieu's snapshot of the couple smiling under the consecrated monument, we can probably imagine it, condensing the countless identical shots we have already encountered. According to Bourdieu, photography's place is with the "ritualized cult of domesticity," and those rituals, punctuated by weddings, baptisms and Christmas evenings function as a powerful collective cohesive force.[28]

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[24] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 1st American ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 67-73.

[25] Besides Batchen and Zuromskis see also: Risto Sarvas and David M. Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media: The Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, Computer Supported Cooperative Work (London; New York: Springer, 2011); Douglas R. Nickel and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art., *Snapshots: The Photography of Everyday Life, 1888 to the Present* (San Francisco, Calif.: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1998); Brian Coe and Paul Gates, *The Snapshot Photograph: The Rise of Popular Photography, 1888-1939* (London: Ash & Grant, 1977); Lynn Berger, "The Authentic Amateur and the Democracy of Collecting Photographs," *Photography and culture* 2, no. 1 (2009).

[26] Translated as "middle-brow art," scholars such as Michel Frizot *inter alia,* have explained that *art moyen* does not only mean average art, but also it refers to the middle class. Mark Durden, *Fifty Key Writers on Photography*, Routledge Key Guides (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 52; Michel Frizot, *A New History of Photography* (Köln: Könemann, 1998), 719; Rosalind Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral," *October* 31 (1984): 49.

[27] Bourdieu and Boltanski, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, 36.

[28] Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral," 56.

Writing almost two decades later, Rosalind Krauss deeply engages with Bourdieu's reading of photography in order to subvert it. Bourdieu's reading of the snapshot trivializes it as a medium stuck between legitimized cultural forms of expression such as painting and literature and popular ones such as clothing and cookery. Krauss's resistance to Bourdieu's reading is grounded in the belief that there is a discourse proper to photography.[29] Bourdieu's insistence that photographic discourse borrows the concepts of high art fails to convince Krauss.[30] Rather than performing an aesthetic discourse, for Krauss photography is a "project of deconstruction in which art is distanced and separated from itself" or in other words a metalanguage that operates in the field of art.[31]

To a large extent the extremes delineated by Bourdieu's and Krauss's positions contain and define the trends in the literature on the snapshot. At one end, scholars and curators approach snapshot photography as a social practice; at the opposite end, others invest in the works' aesthetic qualities in an attempt to place them on the spectrum of (high) art.[32]

Writing twenty years after Krauss's article on photography and the simulacral, in his analysis of snapshot and vernacular photography, Geoffrey Batchen combines the perspectives of the two writers.[33] On the one hand, Batchen echoes and expands Bourdieu's ideas that snapshots are essentially about conformity. He argues that if one analyses these works closely, s/he will see

[29] Ibid., 58; James Elkins, *Photography Theory*, The Art Seminar (London: Routledge, 2007), 428-9.
[30] Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral," 58; Elkins, *Photography Theory*, 428-9.
[31] Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral," 63; 68.
[32] Since the late 1990s, many of the leading American museums have done exhibitions on the snapshot: the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1998, Metropolitan Museum in 2000, the Getty in 2004, and the Smithsonian in 2011. While each took a specific approach, they all selected works that would stand out. The curatorial choice in these exhibits often privileges the aesthetic qualities of the images in an effort to elevate the amateur to art, so that they are not shamed next to the museum's masterpieces. For a detailed description see: Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images*, 114.
[33] On his specific writing on the vernacular see: Geoffrey Batchen, "Vernacular Photographies," in *Each Wild Idea: Writing, Photography, History*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

that "they are all the same, but they are all also just slightly different from each other."[34] This visual economy of the "same but different" allows the sitters to at once fulfill social expectations *and* pursue the specter of their individuality.[35] Rather than attempting to elevate the snapshot to art, according to Batchen, the image's banality has to be embraced, as this is the key to unlocking a history specific to photography.[36] In this sense, like Krauss, Batchen believes in the existence of a discourse proper to the medium, which cannot be reduced to an aesthetic one.[37] Moving beyond Krauss, Batchen believes that the study of snapshots is paramount because, as the most ubiquitous of photographic genres, it has the potential of restoring photography "to its own history."[38]

In the field of African photography, writings on vernacular practices are rare. I have not been able to find specific research on amateur and snapshot photography prior to the advent of color technology in the 1970s when photography became a cheap commodity virtually across the continent.[39] While the literature on Western practices is helpful in considering certain paradigms

[34] "Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn," 125.
[35] Ibid., 132.
[36] In the 1990s, photo historian Geoffrey Batchen was one of the first scholars to argue that the importance of snapshots relied on the fact that they tell the history of photography. He argues that they are art history's worst nightmare. They are banal and conventional. They resist the avant-garde. He draws the tension between the attempts of rendering these works "art," versus revealing their banality and valuing it. Various institutions have hosted exhibitions on snapshot photography. While, on the one hand, they expand the genre, on the other they risk neutralizing the snapshot's potential to debunk criteria of art. By raising photography to the level of art, by reading the snapshot and valuing its art historical value, we are trying to render it special, when it is banal. This narrative mirrors the history of photography as a medium itself.
[37] Here I do not want to flatten Krauss's and Batchen's arguments by equating them. In his articles, Batchen harshly critiques an art historical or normative approach to photography that "celebrates singular achievements and their moment of origin." Batchen, "Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn," 126. In this sense, in his larger scholarly contribution Batchen criticizes scholars such as Krauss, who have—as he sees it—promoted an elitist and formalist approach to art history. For one of Batchen's strongest articulations see: "Reviews: "Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism" by Hal Foster; Rosalind Krauss; Yve-Alain Bois; Benjamin H. D. Buchloh," *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 2 (2006).
[38] "Vernacular Photographies," 57. Following Batchen various scholars have developed his line of argument—most recently: Catherine Zuromskis, "Ordinary Pictures and Accidental Masterpieces: Snapshot Photography in the Modern Art Museum," *Art Journal* 67, no. 2 (2008); Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images*.
[39] Here I am thinking of writings on photo albums and amateur practices, such as: Mustafa Hudita, "Ruins and Spectacles: Fashion and City Life in Contemporary Senegal " *Nka: journal of contemporary African art* (2001); "Portraits of Modernity: Fashioning Selves in Senegalese Popular Photography."; Jean-François Werner, "Entre

of amateur practice (the role of social conventions, the rising bourgeois individuality, commodification of photography etc.), it is paramount to first recover the specificities of the local contexts, while accounting for their fluidity and constant evolution. In line with scholars such as Batchen, I argue that the close analysis of these "banal" shots has the potential to generate a fuller understanding of this medium and its relation to the real, history and memory.

From Postcards to *Photo-cartes*

A postcard from a private collection in Senegal depicts a young man posing in a photographic studio (fig.3.2). Wearing a uniform, he probably fought alongside the French army during the First World War. The silver ring on his left hand reveals his identity as a Senegalese Muslim.[40] Placing his weight on his right leg, the man rests his arm on a thin column, an architectural device that has its double in the larger painted backdrop. The backdrop, whose design and colors are fading away, depicts an outdoor scene. It is no longer the generalized "African village" that we found in Louis Hostalier's postcards discussed in Chapter One, but an urban landscape with a bridge leading into the unknown.

While the portrait's materiality recalls that of a postcard, this image was not a mass-produced object. Unlike commercial postcards, this image does not include any superimposed text—be it a title or the photographer's name. The card is not an anonymous postcard; it is a personalized missive. If we turn it over, we discover a handwritten message (fig.3.3). Sent from Dakar, the sender is the sitter, who announces his arrival in Dakar.[41] The inclusion of the text

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Mythe, Pouvoir Et Argent: Le Photographie Africaine En Construction," *WAMP Bulletin* 9-10 (2001-2); "De La Photo De Famille Comme Outil Ethnographique: Une Étude Exploratoire Au Sénégal," *l'Ethnographie* 92, no. 120 (1996).

[40] Commonly worn by men, handmade silver rings often consist of a circular band topped with a cylindrical structure, in which passages of the Quran can be inserted and cherished.

[41] On the back of the postcard only a few words can be read.

turns the object from a machine-made product into a personal conversation. The handwritten text validates and personalizes the object.

This image is an example of the so-called *photo-cartes* or real photo postcards: portraits that were commissioned by a patron and then printed on a postcard format, usually without mention of the photographer or printer.[42] Certainly less expensive than a cabinet print and more modern than a *carte-de-visite,* this new format became extremely popular among the Senegalese middle class. The appearance of *photo-cartes* signaled a major transition. Until the 1920s, the consumption of portraits was still limited to the elite, but with the introduction of newer technologies, this class restriction began to loosen. During archival research in private collections, I was able to find dozens of these portraits printed on postcards during the interwar period. Some, but not all, are accompanied by handwritten text. This material testifies to a broadening of portrait consumption, as well as a shift in aesthetic trends, in terms of composition, poses and fashion styles.

The distinction between postcards and *photo-cartes* is primarily technical. For the production of postcards, photographs were sent often to European printing firms that would turn the image into plates or screens. These plates allowed the reproduction of the image hundreds or thousands of times. Making printing plates was rather costly, but once the master plate was produced virtually any quantity could be produced.

Photo-cartes are photographs produced from negatives, chemically printed on photographic paper with postcard backs. The *photo-cartes* manufacturing process was more direct than the procedure for printed postcards: in most cases, professional and amateur photographers developed the film themselves and then printed it onto photographic paper. From

[42] These images have also been described in short by Bajorek. Jennifer Bajorek, "Photography and National Memory: Senegal About 1960," *History of Photography* 34, no. 2 (2010): 162.

about 1905 into the 1930s, in the United States, it was common practice for photographic studios to print portraits of their clients on postcard paper.[43] In 1903, Kodak began producing a folding camera—the 3A Folding Pocket Kodak—that created postcard-size negatives, facilitating the process of printing directly onto postcard paper.[44] While the Brownie Camera could also produce real photo postcards, this new camera used postcard-sized negatives that, once exposed, could be printed onto paper formatted with a postcard back.[45] Commercial photographers, as well as amateur snapshooters, used this technology to make their own photographic postcards for albums or to share with friends and relatives.

As a 1914 Kodak publication explains: "A postcard bearing a picture printed from a negative made by the sender is doubly welcome, for it has the *individuality* of companionship—a *personal* touch that is lacking in the cards we buy."[46] Accordingly, while postcards and *photo-cartes* look similar, the latter is an image made directly from a negative while the former is a mass-produced object.[47] Unlike an anonymous commodity, Kodak advertises *photo-cartes* as an individualized object that allows the idiosyncratic personality of the author to manifest and a personal communication with the receiver to be established: they are selling individuality and the possibility of human connection.

If in the West *photo-cartes* have rarely been studied, particularly within art history, on the African continent I have been able to find only passing references to this type of material.[48] Yet,

[43] Robert Bogdan and Todd Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography*, 1st ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 9.
[44] Ibid., 10.
[45] Rachel Snow, "Correspondence Here: Real Photo Postcards and the Snapshot Aesthetic," in *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*, ed. David Prochaska and Jordana Mendelson (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 42.
[46] Ibid., 44.
[47] Bogdan and Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography*, 8-9.
[48] Erin Haney has found this type of image in Ghana, but more research has to be conducted. Erin Haney, Personal communication, Washington D.C., 2014

the abundance of *photo-cartes* in Senegalese collections attests to the fact that this format was common and the genre highly appreciated.

Already by the early 1900s, Dakar had replaced Saint Louis as the capital of French West Africa.[49] As the new major urban hub, Dakar attracted businesses and functioned as the political center for the whole region. The inauguration of *les chemins de fer*—the trains that connected Dakar to Saint Louis in 1885 and then the harbor of Dakar to the Niger River passing through Thiès and Bamako in 1924—facilitated the transportation of primary resources to the *métropole* and accelerated the processes of urbanization and mobility.[50] While businesses—including photographic studios—started to move to the city of Dakar, Saint Louis remained an important center for the intellectual life of the colony. Two of the earliest Senegalese photographers, Meïssa Gaye and Mama Casset were both born in Saint Louis. The pride of belonging to "the civilization of Saint Louis" continued to prosper alongside a sense of decadence and nostalgia for a past glory.

Compared to the portraits of the early 1900s, the *photo-cartes* from the teens and twenties not only comprised a new genre, but also introduced new ways of portraying sitters. In one example, we have the half-length portrait of a woman (fig.3.4). This closer framing does not allow the photographer to introduce props or employ ornamental backdrops. While a certain rigor still dominates the pose, the close framing immediately reduces the distance between the viewer and the sitter. The size of the object too, as one that can be carried and manipulated easily, enhances the intimacy of the viewing experience: the *photo-carte* was designed to be held and

[49] This strategic move was orchestrated by the new Governor General of the A.O.F., Ernest Roume just as he assumed his new position in 1902. For more on Roume see: Robinson, "The Murids: Surveillance and Collaboration," 201-4.
[50] G., "Les Chemins De Fer Africains," *Annales de Géographie* 13e Année, no. 72 (15 novembre 1904) (1904): 447-8.

touched.[51] Finally, the bust portrait allows us to admire the details of the sitter's outfit: from the crisp texture of the checkered *boubou* to the fine details of her *parure.* The shininess and folds of the indigo-dyed textile—both her dress and her matching headdress called *jeere pof*—suggest the care and thought of the wearer: by applying Arabic gum to the textile and then ironing it, new pieces of cloth acquire a luminosity and stiffness that reflect the wearer's taste and status.

As in previous images, the hands play an active role in the composition. In a culture where the body had to be covered, particularly in formal occasions by clouds of crisp textiles,[52] the face, hands and feet were often the only visible body parts. Hands and feet would often be decorated with precious jewelry and natural dyes such as henna, in Wolof *foudon*. As the woman rests her hands one on top of the other on her abdomen, we can admire her long hennaed fingers with her shiny darkened nails. The hand gesture allows the sitter to display the ensemble of her jewelry: two silver rings, bracelets on both wrists, a complex necklace, earrings that cover the ears and a golden coin decorating the hairstyle called *Pof,* common in the 1920s.[53]

The elaborate frame adds a further layer to the composition. The oval shape contains and solemnizes the portrait. Generally, borders in *photo-cartes* consist of a plain uniform white edge around the picture. In some cases, more complex designs such as heart, diamond, leaf or even fish shapes are employed. Photographers produced these frames by using "masks": paper cutouts or celluloid with inked designs that were placed on the negative between the light source and the developing paper. During the printing phase, these masks, which could be purchased from commercial producers or handmade by the photographer, would block the light, creating ornamental structures.[54]

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[51] On the importance of the size of photographs see: Batchen, "Does Size Matter?."
[52] Besides the religious concerns, in Senegal there is an aesthetic of building up the body's grandeur through cloth.
[53] Niang, *Reflets De Modes Et Traditions Saint-Louisiennes*, 28.
[54] Bogdan and Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography*, 18-19.

Similarly to postcards, in *photo-cartes* certain motifs appeared with greater frequency: the oval shape as framing device, the half-length portrait and the emphasis on hand gestures. In another *photo-carte* (fig.3.5-6), the two female sitters' hands are gently clasped, allowing them to display their jewelries and seal their complicity. Their touch is gentle and visualizes their bond. In a third *photo-carte* (fig.3.7), the photographer captured a couple: in placing their hands one on top of the other, the sitters express their loyalty. The hand gesture does not disclose intimacy, but privileges a contractual relationship—possibly their marriage—a pose also frequently documented in the histories of other popular art mediums such as Renaissance painting in Europe.

Z.S. Strother suggests that early Western photographers working in the colonies had not realized the potential of local customers and made little effort to cater to that clientele.[55] Certainly with the *cartes-de-visite*, cabinet prints and postcards discussed in Chapter One, the sitters who could afford to have their portraits taken were very few. By the 1920s though, with the popularization of portraiture, the demand for this commodity was rapidly increasing. The exchange of portraits became a new ritual that integrated rooted social practices.[56] The photograph became an object that could travel easily, making it easier to express affection and establish social ties among friends and relatives. Its value was embedded in this ability to travel and be manipulated (stored, exchanged, hung, signed etc.).

Despite my attempts to trace the pedigree of these *photo-cartes*, it was not possible to establish their authors. While until the 1930s, photographic studios were mostly owned by Europeans, Syrians and Caribbeans, by the 1920s, the Senegalese Mama Casset and Mix Gueye were learning the métier by working as assistants for Tennequin and Oscar Lataque. The French

[55] Strother, "'A Photograph Steals the Soul': The History of an Idea," 190.
[56] Madame Mbaye in Saint Louis recalled that it was not rare to send photos in Senegal. Sometimes it would take up to fifteen days to receive a letter in Senegal, and they would reply to say that they had received it. Madame Mbaye, Personal communication, Saint Louis 2013.

Tennequin had opened the *Comptoir Photo de L'AOF* in 27-29 Avenue Roume in Dakar in 1910 (fig.3.8). Oscar Lataque owned his own studio, producing postcards and working for local clients including La Mission de Saint Esprit in the 1920s (fig.3.9).[57] While the majority of *photo-cartes* were unsigned, most likely they were produced in the commercial studios where Senegalese such as Mama Casset and Mix Gueye were trained. These photographers were probably the ones in charge of developing the actual negatives. Twenty years later, they became the most popular Senegalese studio photographers, as we will see in Chapter Four.

Portrait photography in Africa is often associated with studio practices of the independence era. While it is fair to say that the literature is still surprisingly thin, these practices are often seen as emerging in a vacuum. The study of postcards and *photo-cartes* is essential to discovering the genesis of this genre and the development of portraiture as a genre. No longer a luxury good, but not a cheap commodity either, these portraits on paper became the latest trend in the market.

Saint Louisian Photographer 1: **the temporality of the snapshot**

In a photo taken in Saint Louis in 1915, five *métisse* women pose in front of the camera (fig.3.10). The *métis* collector Xavier Ricou identified the sitters as members of the Dumont family.[58] Alongside dozens of other families from Saint Louis and Gorée, the Dumonts are the result of a rooted history of *métissage* that has its origin in the Portuguese presence in Senegal in the sixteenth century. The *métis* community emerged as a group in the late eighteenth century, but only solidified their identity a century later.

[57] One album containing his photos is also archived at UC Santa Barbara: African photograph album Senegal (Dakar) /French West Africa, circa 1936-1937 (Ref. Bernath Mss 407).
[58] Xavier Ricou, Personal Communication, Dakar, Senegal 2013.

The history and role of the *métis* in Senegal is rather complex. The Senegalese writer Abdoulaye Sadji in his novel *Nini: Mulâtresse du Sénégal* recounts: "Saint-Louis is the capital of the *mulâtresse,* their closed universe from where they glimpse the sweet and beautiful France. The sweet and beautiful France, object of loving sighs, lost motherland."[59] Originally the colonial mission sought to recreate France in miniature in their African colony. The *métis* to a great extent were the *trait d'union* between the natives and the colonial administration. In specific moments during the colonial period, they felt closer to their French identity and embraced those social codes that demonstrated their equality to the "superior race."[60] At other times they embraced their Senegalese identity. Their role in the social and political life of the colony was central. Historian Hilary Jones argues that the concept of a Senegalese identity was shaped in the nineteenth century precisely through the activities of the Deves and other influential *métis* families.[61]

In this mixed society, the women—or as they were called at the time *Signares*—played a significant role in the life of the colony until at least the mid-nineteenth century. Partly as a consequence of their marriages with Europeans, this class of women had exceptional economic and political power, virtually controlling a great portion of coastal trade. Given their unusual status, the *Signares* were often depicted by French artists who were fascinated by this almost mythical female figure.[62] While the *Signares* disappeared as the practice of mixed marriages

[59] Abdoulaye Sadji, *Nini: Mulâtresse Du Sénégal*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1988), 42.
[60] Generally the *métis* were predominantly Catholic. Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa*, 185.
[61] Ibid., 186.
[62] For further readings on representation of the Signares see: David Boilat, *Esquisses Sénégalaises: Physionomie Du Pays, Peuplades, Commerce, Religions, Passé Et Avenir, Recits Et Legendas* (Paris: Bertrand, 1853); George E. Brooks, "Artists' Depictions of Senegalese Signares: Insights Concerning French Racist and Sexist Attitudes in the Ninenteenth Century," *Genéve-Afrique: Journal of the Swiss Society of African Studies* xviii, no. 1 (1980); Régine Goutalier, "Splendeur Et Déclin Des Signares Du Sénégal," *Le Mois en Afrique*, no. 217-18 (1984); Ricou, *Trésor De L'iconographie Du Sénégal Colonial*.

became less common in the late nineteenth century, *métisse* women and their descendants continue to be associated with this heritage until the present day.

In the group portrait (fig 3.10), the photographer immortalized three generations of women. As Richard Brilliant argues, group portraits more than anything serve to document the relationships between the sitters.[63] The close angle of the shot combined with the posture of the sitters conveys a sense of these women's proximity and intimacy. These concepts are enhanced by the compositional structure that flattens and compresses the space—the only window in the background is covered by a curtain. As Alexander Black wrote in 1887, "nothing is more precarious than photographing an interior."[64] The windows are the "greatest anxiety, since they themselves require only the short exposure given a landscape, while the dim interior demands an exposure perhaps fifty times as long."[65] In this shot, the photographer solves the issue by covering the window with a curtain, and having the main light source face the sitters, creating shadows on the wall behind. The room is modestly decorated: an iron bed, a calendar hung on the wall that shows 1915 as the current year, two frames with small photos of young children, and a mirror reflecting the posing women.[66]

As Fineman discussed, photography is a "particularly accident-prone medium": it is conjectural and incidental: amateurs' photo albums make up an "anthology of (successful) errors."[67] In these snapshots, we can identify the traces of Fineman's argument. In the group portrait (fig.3.10), the incidental is apparent in the shot's out-of-focus quality, with the standing woman who is slightly too late in striking her best pose. In a second attempt (fig.3.11), as the

[63] Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 92.
[64] Black, "The Amateur Photographer," 151.
[65] Ibid.
[66] The room recalls the descriptions of the interior of *métis* houses by Abdoulaye Sadji at the turn of the century: "Some large paintings, representing still lives and different scenes of the bourgeoisie life, are hanging on the walls in golden frames. Here and there, in the best places, they can distinguish the family photos, enlarged, exhibited as witnesses of an ancient glory." Sadji, *Nini: Mulâtresse Du Sénégal*, 28.
[67] Fineman, *Other Pictures: Anonymous Photographs from the Thomas Walther Collection*.

standing woman finally finds her pose, the youngest child sitting in front moves, floundering the possibility of perfect stillness and spotless composure.

Thierry De Duve describes the snapshot as "always too early to see the event occur at the surface; always too late to witness its happening in reality."[68] In this sense, the snapshot and the portrait stand at opposite ends of the portraiture spectrum: "whether of a live or dead person, the portrait is funerary in nature, a monument. Acting as a reminder of times that have died away, it sets up landmarks of the past."[69] Conversely, the snapshot renders the fluency of time. Therefore in this asymmetrical reciprocity, while the portrait "freezes the superficial time of the image," the snapshot "releases it."[70] De Duve considers the photo as rendering temporality within the paradox of photography that conjuncts incompatible spaces and times: the now and there, the here and formerly.[71]

In the blurred quality of the snapshot we see De Duve's "extended temporality" coming to the surface. This extended temporality is also reenacted in the serial modality of this genre, that often prompts multiple images with the same sitters as they are finding their position, moving, shifting, and reaching their full smile. Even as snapshooters are striving to achieve the image's optimal sharpness they fail; they accidently reveal the length of time during exposure by capturing the sitters' movements, either through blurring or a multiplicity of images. In this sense, De Duve's analysis of the snapshot helps us understand the visual innovation introduced by the snapshot, in terms of poses, compositions and ways of being.

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[68] Thierry De Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," *October* 5 (1978): 117.
[69] In this sense, his understanding of a portrait recalls Roland Barthes's approach to his mother's photo that provided the evidence that she had been there, but no longer was. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, 67-73; De Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," 116.
[70] "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," 116.
[71] Ibid.

Thanks to this new technology, sitters could experiment, breaking out from the formality and stiffness of the portrait: they could display their joviality, and, one second later, their melancholy. Two young women wearing light embroidered shirts sit on the handmade raffia armchair in a convivial and joyful exchange (fig.3.12). In another composition, they pose with different outfits, lying on the bed (fig.3.13). After the lighthearted atmosphere of the first shot, the second captures a pensive tone, with one girl holding and looking at the other, whose eyes stare into the distance: a sentimental mise-en-scène that enacts a quiet moment of affection and day-dreaming.

While very different in composition and tone—from formal and portrait-like, to a buoyant *tableau vivant,* to contemplative posturing—the three snapshots of the *métis* family, all taken against the interior backdrops of the same room, reveal the closeness between the sitters and the photographer. The sitters must have felt sufficiently at ease to pose and perform, and the photographer comfortable spending time in these intimate places dominated by female figures. Unfortunately very little is known about the author of these photographs. The French *maison d'édition* Revue Noire published these images for the first time in 1998.[72] At that time, the images were printed from original glass plates owned by the Senegalese photographer, painter and collector Adama Sylla, who also used to work as the archivist of the Centre de Recherches et de Documentation du Sénégal (CRDS) in Saint Louis. In an interview in 2010, Sylla explained that he had bought these negatives from a glass painter in Saint Louis who happened to have them in his studio. The artisan was interested in the materiality of the objects but did not know what to do with them, so he happily sold them to Sylla.[73] Sylla did not know much about the identity of the author, but from the available images—around forty—it is almost certain that the

[72] Pascal Martin Saint Léon, *Anthologie De La Photographie Africaine Et De L'océan Indien* (Paris: Revue noire, 1998).
[73] Adama Sylla, Personal communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, 2010

photographer belonged to the *métis* community, since almost all of the images show members of this tight-knit social group.

The specific position of the *métis* within the Senegalese community is visible in this series, in which the cultural codes and body language differ dramatically from the postcards and *photo-cartes* discussed previously. The indigo textiles, heavy jewelry and headscarves are all gone. The women wear light dresses showing their ankles and the finest shoes, up-to-date with the latest European trends (fig.3.12). Their playful poses contrast with the sobriety and self-composure found in the *photo-cartes*. Despite the relative fluidity of these social and cultural groups, this series is essential in resisting the temptation to flatten the significance of photography in Senegal. Even within Saint Louis, photography did not mean one thing, but acquired different inflections according to its users and consumers.

Part of the same series, images of the Dumonts are also captured outdoors (fig.3.14). No longer photographed up-close in their bedroom, the women are now seen from afar in a long shot during their leisure time in a city park. From this angle, the viewer can hardly see their faces: the composition is dominated by the tall palms in the background. Two women, both wearing light-colored dresses are sitting on a bench. A third woman is standing in front of them, but seems caught in her own thoughts, looking away from the viewer. On the right a white hat hangs on the edge of the bench, possibly revealing the identity of the photographer behind the camera. A second shot (fig.3.15) portrays the same three women in an even longer shot: the sunlight filtering through the branches of trees fills the picture frame. Here the women stand talking with a fourth male figure. On the left, wearing "that" white hat, one woman stands, holding flowers in her right hand, a blurry dog running in front of her. The same hat in both images opens up the possibility that *she* might have been the photographer.

This series of snapshots of the Dumont family all evoke femininity, but they do so from opposite vantage points. In the domestic setting, the women dominate the space filling the composition; in the outdoor scene, they become smaller, albeit at ease in the natural setting. Through the two styles of images, femininity is defined by domesticity and proximity to nature, and yes, photography too.

Between the 1900s and the 1920s, Kodak launched an aggressive campaign associating the snapshot with middle class values and sentiments.[74] One of Kodak's primary targets in this campaign was female consumers, whom they depicted as their family's historians, and attempted to reach by introducing cameras that "they" could use.[75] This gendered approach worked in Senegal too, where women were often responsible for collecting their family's stories in albums. Alongside other technologies, photography became an integral part of the commodification of free time and domestic life, in Europe as well as in Senegal.[76] These snapshots are some of the earliest images to display leisure activities in Senegal.

Depictions of leisure may recall early modernist paintings. As Meyer Schapiro reminds us, at the end of the nineteenth century depicting leisure became a major trope. In his words,

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[74] Photography in the West is very much associated with the rise of the middle class, yet in countries such as Senegal industrialization did not produce a similar class-consciousness—that is, a clear opposition between working class and the bourgeoisie. Colonialism was certainly built on the capitalist model, but then, locally, did not create economic class stratification with the extremes of the proletariat and the ruling elite. More specifically, there was not a class-conscious struggle in Senegal at least until the late 1940s, when the leading African intelligentsia such as Leopold Sédar Senghor and Ousmane Sembène studied and visited Russia and were deeply engaged with socialism. Traditionally, the Senegalese society was structured around a caste system, whose hierarchical order was not as rigid as the Indian one, but whose influence still shapes today's politics. In this regard, see the dispute around Youssou N'Dour's candidacy in the latest presidential campaign due to his "lower caste." Joseph Bamat, "Senegal's Biggest Star Trades Music for Politics," in *France24 Africa* (2012). Social divisions were mostly structured along caste divisions, and racial and political categorizations (*métisse* vs. the natives, *originaires* vs. colonial subjects) not necessarily organized around economic stratification. On one of the earliest major strikes see: Ousmane Sembène, *God's Bits of Wood*, African Writers Series (Oxford; Portsmouth N.H.: Heinemann, 1995).

[75] Batchen, "Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn," 130.

[76] Referring to Roland Barthes, Zuromskis argues that snapshots are a "depoliticized mode of representation entrenched in a bourgeoisie ideology." Nonetheless, the snapshot remains a site of democratic possibility. Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images*, 21; Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies* ed. Roland Barthes (New York: Noonday Press, 2007), 16.

> It is remarkable how many pictures we have in early Impressionism of informal and spontaneous sociability, of breakfasts, picnics, promenades, boating trips, holidays and vacation travel. These urban idylls not only present the objective forms of bourgeois recreation in the 1860's and 1870's; they also reflect in the very choice of subjects and in the new aesthetic devices the conception of art as solely a field of individual enjoyment, without reference to ideas and motives, and they presuppose the cultivation of these pleasures as the highest field of freedom for an enlightened bourgeois detached from the official beliefs of his class.[77]

Schapiro here points to a social shift in class-consciousness that broadened into the aesthetic, as painters responded to the new rampant consumerism. Bourgeois sociability was no longer defined by community, family and church. High streets and the cafes became the new backdrops defining the individual who blurred in the anonymous indifferent mass. The city and parks became the new habitus, home to spectacles that entertained the bourgeois subject.[78]

In *Women in a Garden* (fig.3.16), Claude Monet portrays three women in a landscape. The generalized title, as well as the lack of an eventful scene, point to the artist's attempt to remove the anecdotal from his work. Nothing significant is happening. No remarkable individual is being portrayed and celebrated; the sitters' facial features are either hard to read or rendered with gestural brush strokes.

Both the photographer of the earlier group photo and the painter here choose female leisure as their subject matter. The only difference lies in the replacement of the aspen trees with the more exotic palms. Both situate the bourgeois subject in an idyllic garden, where there are no apparent traces of urban architecture—the modernity that we will see creeping in, later on.[79]

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[77] Meyer Schapiro, "Nature of Abstract Art," *Marxist quarterly* January-March (1937): 83.
[78] Thomas E. Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 13.
[79] For further reading on the depictions of urban and rural landscapes in early modernist paintings see: Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 141-94; "City Vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin," in *From Millet to Léger: Essays in Social Art History*, ed. Robert L. Herbert (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

Comparing the snapshot of an amateur photographer in West Africa to an early modernist oil painting may seem far-fetched. There is no evidence that the photographer was interested in or inspired by this genre. Yet this comparison is valuable for two specific reasons. Firstly, as Fineman put it, "most amateur photographers are neither noble nor savage": they absorb mainstream art and photography "like sponges."[80] In this sense, snapshots become a precious litmus test for the ideas and aesthetics that were in vogue. These trends re-emerge in amateur practices as a visual montage of references from high art to mass culture. Secondly, this comparison shows us what a snapshot is not.

Snapshots are often understood as being impromptu spontaneous photos. As Pierre Bourdieu argued however, snapshots may be more about enacting normalcy than improvisation.[81] Even when they are mostly unplanned, the composition tends to be arranged before the click goes off. In this sense, the snapshot strives to accomplish a formal unity and compose an organic narrative whereas the avant-garde painting seeks to mine precisely those aesthetic principles. As Peter Bürger stated, the "development of a concept of the nonorganic work of art is a central task of the theory of the avant-garde": the art object is no longer representational; by presenting a fragmented composition, the modernist work forces the viewer into a new and shocking viewing experience.[82] In the case of Monet, the painting seeks to

[80] Fineman, *Other Pictures: Anonymous Photographs from the Thomas Walther Collection*.
[81] Bourdieu and Boltanski, *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*; Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images*.
[82] According to Bürger the creation of the avant-garde was grounded on the urge of disrupting the ideological role played by pre-avant-garde art. The latter served the utopian function of picturing an illusionary world of unity, which could entertain the viewer. By seeing works that did not acknowledge societal suppressive system, the viewer is induced in a "virtual vacation" from domination. By creating *organic* works of art (i.e. unified and representational), pre-avant-garde artists projected "an image of the reconciliation of man and nature. Peter Bürger, "The Avant-Gardiste Work of Art," in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* ed. Peter Bürger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 68; 78. Contrarily *nonorganic* works (i.e. fragmented and non-representational), such as montage, reject "a necessary congruence between the meaning of the individual parts and the meaning of the whole." Ibid., 78. Accordingly, the reconciliation of man with nature is disrupted. Through their inherent fragmentation, *nonorganic* works can produce an effect of shock in the viewer, who is unable to read the work using conventional approaches.

provide a snapshot of reality—that is, a spontaneous glimpse of a banal moment that has not been staged.

Almost in diametric opposition, the snapshot strives for a perfectly crafted composition: the Dumonts' family portrait is centered and the sitters look into the camera, posing almost symmetrically while avoiding an utterly rigid formality (fig.3.10-11). What we may originally read as "spontaneous" in the snapshot is not created by an accident, but is possibly engendered by a new aesthetic.

In the early twentieth century, Kodak invested heavily in the promotion of their products through adverts and instructional materials that circulated globally. The manuals never pushed for an experimental aesthetic; rather they encouraged their clients to master the practices of studio photography, aiming for the perfect "unposed pose."[83] What Kodak was seeking to teach was the "controlled snapshot effect." [84] Kodak's primary clients were not sophisticated artists, but rather the new, growing amateur clientele, who could afford the technology and experiment with it in their leisure time. Geoffrey Batchen describes this dynamic as the aesthetic of the "same but different," whereby we are all trying to comply with social norms, but with a twist that hints to our individuality; this, however, rarely approaches the avant-garde.[85]

In comparing the Dumont picture with Monet's painting, we discover that the photograph is more pictorial than the painting; and likewise, the painting is more photographic than the photo. While Monet emulated the camera's ability to capture the accidental, snapshooters did not pursue the transient or the blurred; rather they strove to contain the fleeting.[86] These snapshots

[83] Snow, "Correspondence Here: Real Photo Postcards and the Snapshot Aesthetic," 45.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Batchen, "Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn," 125.
[86] For the relation between realism, Impressionism and photography see: Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (Harmondsworth, Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), 44; 168; Kirk Varnedoe, "The Artifice of Candor: Impressionism and Photography Reconsidered," *Art in America* (1980): 75; Joel Isaacson, "Constable, Duranty, Mallarmé, Impressionism, Plein Air,

are captivating not because they genuinely document the daily lives of these sitters, but rather because they project the ideal world they wished to inhabit—one that may resemble Paris more than Saint Louis.

Saint Louisian Photographer 2: "Galleries of Photos"

The opening image of this chapter is part of a series that was published for the first time by *Revue Noire* in the late 1990s (fig.3.1**)**. Along with other portraits featuring similar "galleries of photos" as backdrops, this picture was produced between the 1930s and 40s. The profile of the author, which describes him as someone who enjoyed taking pictures in his free time, is one of the few details we know about the creation of these images. In a series of interviews I conducted in Saint Louis, the collector Adama Sylla explained that the author was a Saint Louisian amateur of a certain age who used to work in the colonial administration. Passionate about photography, he attended social events where he took photos. Eventually he began to print and offer them to his friends and relatives. According to Sylla, the man, who had given him his works, wanted to remain anonymous and therefore has never disclosed his identity.[87] Luckily, Sylla had kept the negatives and vintage prints in their original boxes, which provide important information about the photographer.

We discover that the photographer printed some in Saint Louis in Etienne Lagrange's studio and at Émile Sursock's *Au Colonial Photo*; others were developed in Dakar at Tennequin's *Comptoir Photo de l'A.O.F.* (fig.3.17-18). Tennequin's and Lagrange's box lids share the same design: on the bottom a French text identifies the brand of the photographic

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and Forgetting," *The Art Bulletin* 3 (1994): 433; Peter Galassi, "Caillebotte's Space," in *Gustave Caillebotte*, ed. Kirk Varnedoe, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and Brooklyn Museum of Art (New Haven and London: 1976).

[87] Unfortunately Sylla discovered that the remaining boxes were thrown away and therefore the only images that are left are those in his possession. Adama Sylla, Personal Communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, 2013.

material as Kodak; a central space contains text identifying the specific photographic studio. In the upper section, a printed drawing portrays a white male who is taking a photo while his wife and son are symmetrically posing by his side, engaging in the same activity. The man wears a suit, indicating that he is not a professional photographer, but a middle-class man, a family man, who is taking photos for fun.

Kodak found its success by making photography accessible. User-friendly cameras such as the Brownie sold in the United States for as little as one dollar in the 1900s. Kodak's aggressive marketing in the early twentieth century is well known. They targeted the growing middle class, creating a new consumer demand for photography, capitalizing on new social values such as leisure. Kodak's successful global reach, however, should not undermine the company's shortcomings in addressing foreign markets. Kodak was certainly the most popular photographic brand in Dakar and Saint Louis. In many interviews I conducted, it emerged that photographers travelled to these cities from across the country and throughout the region to buy Kodak products and get training on their newest technologies.[88] Yet the company failed to tailor its products to the local clientele: the white amateur with his suit and nuclear family remained the face of the company even in Sub-Saharan Africa at least until the 1960s (fig.3.19).[89]

Once we open the paper sleeve, we can see vintage prints side by side with the original negatives about 1.5 by 2.5 inches square. These tiny objects are telling because, as with most amateurs, the author of these shots probably did not have the equipment or the skills to develop his own negatives. Instead, he would have brought them to the commercial studios in Dakar and Saint Louis.

[88] Abdou Fary, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal May 2014
[89] The Senegalese magazine *Bingo* available since 1953 is a great source to trace the development of photographic adverts and technologies.

The amateur's oeuvre includes two types of snapshots: those taken inside and those outside, generally during social events such as baptisms, weddings or religious celebrations. In another photograph featuring the same woman as fig.3.1, she is captured wearing a different outfit in a bedroom that, like the previous room, displays a rich collection of photographs on the walls (fig.3.20). The woman sits on the edge of the bed, turning her head toward us. The bed is covered with white cotton linen and the pillows feature precious embroidery across their white fabric. The photographer must have held the camera against his stomach, which employs a slightly lower angle, revealing both the sitter in full, with her new outfit, and the wall behind her. Next to her, a young boy stands wearing a white tunic and two necklaces around his neck: they are *gris-gris,* that is, leather pockets that contain special substances aimed at protecting the child from illness and danger, prepared *ad hoc* by the *marabout*.

On the wall behind the two sitters, dozens of small format photos are pinched in the woven mats. There is a calendar hanging up too, but this time the date is not legible. The photos on the wall are about the same size as those still kept in the small sleeves by Adama Sylla (fig.3.21). Probably the smallest size available, these photos were the cheapest way to print multiple images. The abundance of these small format pictures could hint to the fact that the house owner was either passionate about photographs, or was a photographer himself. The "gallery of photos" does not include only photographs of Senegalese subjects: slightly behind the woman's head it is possible to make out a portrait of a woman who is neither West African nor European, but probably North African. This woman's pose recalls that of film stars: the three quarter profile, strongly lit, with dramatic shadows. In another frame a white couple is pictured locked in a close embrace. These portraits, in their variety, were all part of these sitters' "image

world."[90] Coined by Deborah Poole, this term "captures the complexity and multiplicity of this realm of images […] it is a combination of these relationships of referral and exchange among images themselves, and the social and discursive relations connecting image-makers and consumers."[91]

In another portrait, an older woman is captured against a wall of photos (fig.3.22). This time they are no longer small format images, but rather large, framed portraits, all of Senegalese sitters: women and men photographed half-bust as they look into the camera. Among the sitters, one elegant man is wearing a suit, while the women—the majority are women—exhibit local styling and attires. The woman posing in front of the photos wears a similar dress and headdress to the women behind her, echoing the coevality among the photos. The upright posture of the standing woman with her four golden necklaces and her purse, echoes conventions of formal portraiture, rather than the informality of snapshot photography.

The richness of the composition is not limited to the photographs covering the wall; on the lower part, diverse objects decorate the room, including embroidered textiles that celebrate France's "*fraternité*," mats with painted Asian landscapes, postcards and decorative objects.

Besides this portrait, the series includes dozen of other photos probably taken on the same day with other guests posing in front of that same wall. While the majority of portraits are of women, there are men among the subjects, suggesting that the "gallery of photos" was certainly treasured by women, but was not gender exclusive (fig.3.23-24).

The "gallery of portraits" is a recurrent trope in the history of photography. American photographer Mathew Brady (1823-1896) in 1860 opened his fourth and last New York studio, which he named National Portrait Gallery (fig.3.25). Having established his fame documenting

[90] Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*, 7.
[91] Ibid.

the Civil War, Brady never missed an opportunity to take the portrait of illustrious Americans that would then circulate widely in the form of engraving. He was renowned for bringing clients to his studio, where his portrait gallery would overwhelm the client[92] Another famous photograph within photographs is Alfred Stieglitz's *Sun Rays—Paula, Berlin* (fig.3.26). Shot in 1889, Stieglitz's photograph depicts a well-dressed young woman sitting at a desk writing a letter. The room and her silhouette are lit by stripes of sunlight filtering through venetian blinds. This portrait is considered a major work, not only for its display of the photographer's technical ability, managing the contrast between light and shadow, but also because it has come to be interpreted as an allegory of photography itself.[93] The photographer captures the light, that enters from the window as through a camera shutter, and reveals a wall covered in photos. Here the shot is more telling of the act of photography than of the sitter herself. Meanwhile in the Senegalese series, the anonymous photographer is not concerned with the reflexive nature of the medium; rather, his work indicates how photography emerged as a social imperative with a precise local significance.

The Saint Louisian Fatou Niang Siga wrote a short book on coiffures and social mores in the city. She recalls that Saint Louis had a unique practice named *xoymet* in Wolof. This practice, in vogue probably since the 1930s, entailed decorating a room before a woman, or *ndaw si* in Wolof, married: during the process the walls would be covered with photos borrowed from relatives and friends. In her words:

> For two weeks, the bride's friends would go from house to house to borrow the most beautiful photographic reproductions from relatives and friends. From the ceiling to the three-quarters of the height of the wall, the room of the future couple would then be wonderfully decorated. Fans, multicolor *ampoules,* small pillows, and wooden decorated

[92] Mary Panzer et al., *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Portrait Gallery, 1997).
[93] Diana Emery Hulick, "Alfred Stieglitz's Paula (1889): A Study in Equivalence," *History of Photography* 17, no. 1 (1993): 90.

> spoons were placed at intervals between photos. […] This decoration was executed by specialists who did not ask for anything in return, but were thanked with delicious food by the organizers. The final work – that is the decorated room – was called "*xoymet*." The wedding ceremony was then animated by musicians and *griots*, who celebrated the families of the future married couple.[94]

Anthropologist Mustafa Hudita formulated this understanding of *xoymet,* arguing that "portraiture accentuated local preoccupations with self-presentation and provided new forms of interior decoration as urban society developed and stratified."[95] During field interviews, a few women still recalled this unique Saint Louis tradition. Among them, Amina Mbaye remembered that in her house the walls had hundreds of photos. She said "it was part of the wedding ceremony; we were very respected when the house was full of photos."[96] When asked to explain why, she said "it showed that they were civilized."[97] Photographers were still rare at that time and those who owned photos were admired. Mbatio Thiam in Saint Louis explains that the motivating factors behind this practice were to impress the husband, and show that the woman came from a good family.[98]

The practice of decorating the room was not, however, limited to marital practices. Up to the present day, it has been common to find rooms fully covered with photos (fig.3.27). In Wolof marriages, the man is often called "*borom kër,*" or in Pulaar, another local language, "*jom galle,"* which translates as the owner of the house. The woman is called in both Wolof and Pulaar "*jom suudu,"* which means the owner of the room.[99] The management of the house is organized along gendered lines. The man has the responsibility of buying and managing the house, whereas the woman has exclusive control of the bedroom. Furthermore the man, who could have up to four

[94] Niang, *Reflets De Modes Et Traditions Saint-Louisiennes*, 54.
[95] Hudita, "Portraits of Modernity: Fashioning Selves in Senegalese Popular Photography," 176.
[96] Madame Mbaye, Personal communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, 2013
[97] Madame Mbaye, Personal communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, 2013
[98] Mbatio Thiam, Personal communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, 2014
[99] Mamadou Dia, Personal communication, New York, 2014

wives, could have multiple homes. Until very recently, extended family lived in a "*maison familial*" where most spaces were shared. The woman's room was then the only space where the woman could keep and display her own objects, while the other rooms and the objects within were shared among extended family members. In this sense, the predilection for the room and photography acquired a strong personal and gendered connotation.

Contemporary collector and artist Serigne N'Diaye has both documented these practices in his writings and reinterpreted them in his recent art installations (fig.3.28). In his thesis, N'Diaye argues that *la chambre,* is "a space of freedom and expression of a woman's cultural and aesthetic tastes and preferences, especially her beliefs."[100] Its décor was based on the accumulation of diverse objects that were never neutral, but on the contrary, charged with memories.[101] The charm of these spaces lies in the abundance of their décor, the elegance of the poses in the photographs, the luxury of the textiles and the sumptuous *parures*. The photos included portraits of religious leaders or *marabouts*, the most charismatic members of one's family, as well as the friends and allies.[102] In his installations, N'Diaye juxtaposes objects he collected in Senegal with his abstract reinterpretations of historical photographs and glass paintings. A visually rich environment, N'Diaye interprets the room as a space of education where all knowledge was passed down: "doing, living and especially, being." [103] In the late afternoons then, when the sun had set and the temperature was cooler, women received guests and spent their time drinking tea and sharing anecdotes stirred up by the photographs on their walls—histories of relatives, updates on common friends, news and the latest fashions.

[100] N'Diaye, "L'intérieur D'une Chambre Moyenne Des Années 1950 Au Sénégal," Intro No page.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., Ch. 1 No page.

The study of all the accessories of the room reveals "the sources of a collective and individual imaginary and the savoir-faire of a people. A functional aesthetic and invigorating occasion of multiple exchanges and reflections on the symbolism of representations."[104] In this series, photography comes to define first the identity of the amateur, who acquires prestige in his social role, and those of the sitters, who want to be framed against the "gallery of portraits." Through these practices, photography was not only associated with the distinction of an economically emancipated subject, but also with the privilege of creating and displaying a solid social network.

Saint Louisian photographer 2: the contours of the bourgeois subject

As part of the same series, the Wolof photographer from Saint Louis portrayed his community in the streets of his native city. The photographer's movements between private and public spaces define the contours of a new subjectivity that is sketched against the backdrop of informal sociability and urban recreation.

A young woman stands in the streets of Saint Louis, ca. 1930 (fig.3.29). Taken in the cityscape rather than within an intimate interior, this snapshot presents the Senegalese woman as an emancipated subject. The cropped views of a car and concrete-block buildings anchor the subject in her urban context. In this photograph, the sitter is no longer seen in the safe space of the private home, but in the cityscape, walking alone and away from the viewer. The image depicts her as a liberated subject who walks in modernity with ease and confidence. We do not know the identity of the photographer or the sitter. However, we do know that, as a resident of Saint Louis, this woman benefitted from the politics of French assimilation. As a Saint Louisian, she was also automatically a French citizen. And as a Saint Louisian, she had the right to vote for

[104] Ibid., Intro No page.

her representative in the French National Assembly. The juxtaposition of the woman and the urban context demonstrates a convergence of histories and geographies that are here presented as compatible and even mutually constitutive.

In the outdoor scenes too we witness the emergence of a new Saint Louisian identity—one that was often grounded in a distinction from the French as well as the African subjects living in the colony. Those who were born outside the four communes did not have special status: they were colonial subjects who typically had more duties than rights under the French colonial regime.[105] This distinction was experienced in daily life: in choosing a seat in the cinemas and theatres that were operating as early as the 1890s,[106] or during election times in exercising one's right to vote.[107] According to historian Wesley Johnson the *originaires*' political privileges were greater than those of the Creoles in British colonies such as Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and yet, their culture was far less influenced by Western culture. Why? Because the majority of the *originaires* had remained Muslim.[108] Besides their juridical specificity, the *originaires* were known to distinguish themselves with their lifestyle, their way of walking, and their conception of beauty. In short, their special status engendered the creation of an urban space of civility, well before the achievement of independence in 1960.[109]

In another shot (fig.3.30), the same photographer captures a couple as they stand by a typical Saint Louisian house. Once again, the portrait is taken at an angle that creates a dynamic composition: the two sitters pose facing the photographer; behind them the perspectival lines defined by the profile of the one-story building, reinforced by a row of successive windows,

[105] Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," 672.
[106] David, "Hostalier – Noal: Un Duel De Photographes Au Journal Officiel Du Sénégal, Il Y a Cent Ans," 12-3.
[107] Personal communication with Prof. Mamadou Diouf, New York 2014.
[108] Johnson, "The Senegalese Urban Elite, 1900-1945," 139.
[109] Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial," 288.

situate the vanishing point outside the frame. The juxtaposition of the two diverging planes—that of the sitters and that of the building—creates a two-point perspective. This formal strategy avoids the flattening effect of frontal portraits and projects the sitters in the urban environment. With only one tiny triangle in the upper right corner opening into the clear sky, the composition is dominated by urban architecture.

Compared to the *métis* shots, the Wolof photographer seems to experiment more with his compositions. Yet, his subjects are certainly more posed. Kodak's rhetoric of the "unposed pose" was to a certain extent less appealing to these sitters, who, for instance, will never be caught smiling, giggling, or in sentimental mise-en-scène. These behaviors, which elsewhere would be seen as normal and even favorable, here would be seen as inappropriate and shallow—even for informal photographs. The woman's austere look in this image is evident of this attitude.

The portrait captures the couple as if they were strolling in the city. With his left hand in his pocket the man, wearing his European suit, complete with a black bowler hat, matching his shoes, communicates a nonchalant attitude. In 1936, the Senegalese writer Ousmane Socé Diop wrote the novel *Karim, roman sénégalais,* recounting the adventures of his protagonist, Karim growing up in Saint Louis. His descriptions of the social mores of his fellow Saint Louisians at the end of the colonial era are invaluable: "We noticed the Catholic Senegalese and Muslim "*évolués*." They wore summer suits with a irreproachable cut: in flannel, a cream tone, a white tone, smooth as mirrors for have been perfectly ironed; silk dickey, rich tie and fine shoes. Their hair, patiently combed, broke in tiny waves down to the neck."[110] Different outfits could reveal the wearer's social status and religious affiliation. But the looks could also change according to the occasion: from local cuts to European styles, depending on the wearer's motives and

[110] Ousmane Socé Diop, *Karim, Roman Sénégalais*, 3rd ed., Bibliothèque De L'union Française (Paris: Nouvelles Éditiones latines, 1966), 112.

destination—the cinema or the *Tabaski* (i.e. Eid al-Adha, one of the biggest and most popular Muslim events that honors the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his promised son). In various interviews with tailors, both styles—the European and the local—were described as modern, and each entailed specific behaviors and poses in the studios.[111] In this shot, while the man is wearing a European suit, the woman has chosen a perfectly matched ensemble dictated by the latest local fashions. Again, in Saint Louis, these two styles are not necessarily contradictory but mutually constitutive.

Alongside similar ones, these two shots both shape and mirror new emerging subjectivities that distinguish, for instance, rural from urban dwellers. Once again the writer Ousmane Socé Diop is illuminating in understanding the distance in cultural terms and social class between the *originaires* and the colonial subjects living in the colony. As his main protagonist Karim leaves Saint Louis, he gives his impression of the interior of the country: "How different was life [in the village] from that that we lived in Dakar, Rufisque and Saint Louis! Here […] in the bush, life was reduced to its simplest expression. Existence was natural and similar to that of plants: work and conserve oneself, then save one's soul from hell by giving one's surplus to your *marabout*."[112] These sentences express Karim's sense of superiority as a Saint Louisian who sought to distinguish himself. As an urban subject, he is defined by his social, professional and intellectual activities inside his home and out in the streets. It is then not surprising that it is in Saint Louis, where these attitudes prevailed, that some of the earliest snapshot practices emerged and flourished.

The photographer is not simply documenting social circumstances, but also crafting a specific identity that is tied to his role as an amateur photographer. Let's consider, for instance, a

[111] Abdourahmane Niang, Personal Communication, Dakar, Senegal May 2014
[112] Diop, *Karim, Roman Sénégalais*, 125.

commercial photographer who was active in Saint Louis at the same time. Émile Sursock was of Lebanese origin. With his brother Anis, he managed the *Comptoir Colonial Photo* where he developed negatives, and sold equipment and images he took at social events (fig.3.31).[113] The Sursock brothers were likely active as early as the mid 1930s.

Most of the photographs and *photo-cartes* that have the stamp "Colonial Photo E. Sursock" only vaguely portray individual sitters. In one example (fig.3.31), a crowd of Saint Louisians is captured in an open space: half of them are sitting, while the other half stand in the back. Attending a special event, most members of the crowd are wearing white fabrics, suggesting it may have been a religious event; the women, all sitting together, wear their best jewelry and headpieces, also hinting to the importance of the occasion. Sursock snaps the crowd without focusing on specific individuals: some are staring at the photographer with serious expressions; others are intent on the event itself, out of frame. Neither a formal portrait nor an intimate snapshot, the photograph functions as a document and a souvenir of the event.

Photos by Sursock would often be displayed in photo albums next to formal portraits and intimate snapshots.[114] In contemporary Senegal, as guests arrive, they are invited to sit in the living room. While waiting for a meal, the woman of the house will give the guest photo albums to skim through. Often they include photos of her wedding, friends and extended family. The album at once entertains the guest and offers an insight into the owner's life and social standing.

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[113] Bajorek briefly mentions Sursock as a photographer working in Saint Louis. Bajorek, "Of Jumbled Valises and Civil Society: Photography and Political Imagination in Senegal," 435. Sursock's activity was mostly commercial, like that of Joseph Krena, also known as JK. Robert Carestan, Personal Communication Saint Louis, Senegal, 2013. Further reference to his activity see: Moumar Gueye, *Itinéraire D'un Saint-Louisien: La Vieille Ville Française À L'aube Des Indépendances* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004), 14. His photos are also published in: Hervé Lenormand and Association Saint Louis Jazz, *Saint-Louis Jazz: Histoires De Jazz Au Sénégal* (Nantes, Senegal: Editions Joca Seria; Association Saint-Louis Jazz: Centre Culturel Français de Saint-Louis, 1196).

[114] The practice of the *xoymet* was not the only setting for the display and consumption of images. Albums too played a vital role. Hudita considers the practice of *xoymet* as establishing an antecedent for the photo album, and particularly the wedding album. Hudita, "Portraits of Modernity: Fashioning Selves in Senegalese Popular Photography," 176.

While albums composed after the 1970s are extremely common in Senegalese households as a result of the availability of cheap color photograph technology, during my research it was rare to find older examples. On only one occasion did I find two albums in a private collection with images dating to the 1920s and 30s. Of these two albums, whose original owner is unknown, one is devoted to the peanut trade, documenting one of the most lucrative businesses in Senegal during the colonial time**.** The second one is very different in nature: small format portraits and snapshots similar to the ones discussed in this chapter are candidly juxtaposed with postcards collected across the continent. The variety of images is astonishing: some pages chronicle the Tabaski, picturing men first slaughtering a sheep and then collected in prayer (fig.3.32). The two shots are placed next to a *photo-carte* of a woman from the 1920s. On another page (fig.3.33) a portrait probably taken in the photographer's studio is placed side by side with another taken outside portraying a group of women all dressed in white. On this page one photograph is missing, leaving an empty space. Probably lent out and not returned, the mark of where the photo had been epitomizes the album's essential metamorphic nature. While its purpose is to compose a cohesive narrative through the selection of meaningful images, the album's coherence is constantly negotiated with photos that are added, moved or removed, putting it in a state of permanent metamorphosis.

In the 1954 novel *Nini La Mulâtresse,* the main character Nini takes out her album: "Like all the respected *mulâtresse*, Nini owned two elegant albums summarizing her life since the age of fifteen and even earlier. One of these albums evokes eloquently her previous life."[115] In an interview with Yaay Thiam, the mother of a friend in Dakar, she explained that "*les photos sont un truc de femmes"*: photographs are a woman's thing.[116] Women are the ones who cherish them

[115] Sadji, *Nini: Mulâtresse Du Sénégal*, 87.
[116] Yaay Thiam, personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, November 2012

the most: they commission, collect, archive and exchange them with their friends and family. As the fictional character Nini describes: "The desire overcomes you and you start to flip through the album again and again; you turn the pages, and return to them incessantly, not because they are exceptionally captivating but because they represent an assessment of a whole life that is gone, and only this remains: some images by way of souvenir."[117]

In *Suspended Conversations,* Martha Langford states the power of photo albums: "What makes the album so special? Well, memories, of course."[118] The photographic album symbolizes a connection with the past. In our personal photo albums, snapshots trigger memories of events from our lives: the photos' emotional power can easily overshadow their aesthetic banality. Similarly, these photo albums indicate the wish to preserve these memories, functioning through their images, which have the power to activate memories of a space that once existed, even if it no longer does. As Anne-Marie Garat suggested, "the family album, in its naïve and defective way, certainly satisfies the immense need for a *story* [*le dit*] which, for lack of written documents [*l'ecrit*], haunts each family."[119] The photo album becomes a powerful tool as viewers insert their own personal memories in the interstices between images. If the album functions as an "oral-photographic performance," images become alive and meaningful precisely when they are described and contextualized by the people who participated in that history.[120] Langford also draws a parallel between photo albums and oral traditions, in that the album functions as mnemonic scaffolding for an oral recitation of a past.

If the oral dimension is embedded in the photographic album as suggested by Garat and Langford, this dynamic becomes particularly relevant in Senegal, which has a strong tradition of

[117] Sadji, *Nini: Mulâtresse Du Sénégal*, 89.
[118] Martha Langford and Musée McCord d'histoire canadienne., *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 3.
[119] Anne-Marie Garat quoted in: ibid., 5.
[120] Ibid.

oral cultures.[121] In the Senegalese context, both albums and the *xoymet* offer endless opportunities for an oral decantation of family histories through portraiture. As a collective process that involves sitters, photographers, collectors and viewers, these visual devices preserve what once was and what may otherwise disappear: they are maps of the past and future.[122]

Besides enacting this "*visuality* of the tactile" and "will to narrative," to use Batchen's words, photography in Senegal is often associated with other senses, more precisely the olfactory.[123] In both interviews and secondary sources the olfactory dimension regularly emerges in relation to beauty and images. In the novel *Nini* for instance we find this passage: "Such an old relic sheltered from air and light, this album encloses at its core scents that are very old but are smooth and persistent that give it a smell of the past. Here then are not only photos with cold souvenirs that they resurrect. They are still and mostly scents, numerous scents, associated inseparably to love scents."[124] Artist and collector Serigne N'Diaye writes: "photos, glass paintings and other objects describe the preferences of the woman. We see all the aesthetics, not only the hedonist ones: those of the word, with a way of talking, that of the gaze […] that of touch *and that of smell* with the abundance of the multiple incenses that necessitate a lot of practical knowledge for their composition."[125] The olfactory dimension of the visual and sensual

[121] On Senegalese oral cultures see: Eric Ross, *Culture and Customs of Senegal*, Culture and Customs of Africa (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2008); Papa Samba Diop, "The Oral History and Literature of the Wolof People of Waalo, Northern Senegal the Master of the Word (Griot) in the Wolof Tradition: Performance of the Epic Tale of the Waalo Kingdom and the Transmission of Knowledge" (University of California, Berkeley, 1993).
[122] Touré Khady Kane, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, December 2012
[123] Batchen, "Vernacular Photographies," 61; 68.
[124] Sadji, *Nini: Mulâtresse Du Sénégal*, 89.
[125] N'Diaye, "L'intérieur D'une Chambre Moyenne Des Années 1950 Au Sénégal," Intro No page. The literature on contemporary art often discusses the expansion of specific media that frequently end up involving more than one sense. In this regard James Elkins writes: "Clement Greenberg's high-modernist trust in eyesight is no longer viable, now that works of visual art are so often also textual, olfactory, tactile, or auditory. Synesthesia, *Einfühlung*, empathy and sympathy, immersion, performance, and embodied encounters are now central to the art experience. Art history is no longer an archivist's or iconographer's paradise, driven by textual sources: it has become attentive to the physical stuff, the presence, the material of the artwork, its bulk, its human scale, and even its "base materiality"." James Elkins, "On Some Limits of Materiality in Art History," *31: Das Magazin des Instituts für Theorie* 12, no. Taktilität: Sinneserfahrung als Grenzerfahrung (2008): 25. For more readings on the expanded

experience within the Senegalese context expands our understanding of the photograph and its phenomenological boundaries.

Conclusion

In his 1927 essay on photography, Siegfried Kracauer employed the metaphor of the "blizzard of photographs" to account for the 'flood' or 'assault' of photographs that tend to "sweep away the dams of memory" and threaten to "destroy the potentially existing awareness of crucial traits."[126] Kracauer here was thinking of the mass production and reproduction of images in popular media such as weekly-illustrated magazines, or in the accumulation of snapshots by the burgeoning photo-hobbyist who sought to "banish the recollection of death."[127] This influx of images instigated, according to the scholar, a dangerous "indifference toward what the things mean."[128]

This chapter considered the "blizzard of photos" that covered Saint Louisians' walls and album pages as amateur photography practices became increasingly popular in the French colony in the interwar period. I focused on two series by Saint Louisian photographers, one *métis* and one Wolof. Very little information is available on these *Photographers Unknown,* and yet their works provide invaluable insights on how photography was produced, used and understood in Senegal between the 1910s and 40s.

The Senegalese context is certainly very different from that of interwar Germany where Kracauer's extreme media pessimism emerged; a view in which the photographic image is bound

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medium see: George Baker, "Photography's Expanded Field," *October* 114 (2005); Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," ibid.8 (1979).

[126] Kracauer and Levin, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, 58-9.

[127] Ibid., 59.

[128] Ibid., 58-9.

to eventually and inexorably annihilate mnemonic processes.[129] In Senegal by the interwar period, the photograph had not—to speak within a Benjaminian frame—become an emptied structure of mere technological reproduction. Photography still contained "the social promise of radically different forms of collective interaction and subjecthood."[130] As the photographers move between the interior and exterior of their homes, they delineate the contours of a new subjectivity. The informality and intimacy inherent to amateur practices allowed sitters and photographers to enact and stage their quotidian life. Historians have documented the Saint Louisians' struggle to construct their identity. I argue that as the *originaires* were constructing their identity, as one that was different from the French living in France and from the African subjects living in the colony, these snapshots fashioned and represented their new forms of urban civility. They neither mimicked the customs of the colonizer, nor conformed to Wolof cultures.[131] To use the words of Ousmane Socé Diop in Saint Louis, "the negro-Arab civilization dominated, tinted with 'Europeanism.'"[132]

[129] Benjamin recognized the height of photographic history in the 1860s, when he noticed this understanding of images. Ibid., 58; Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," 274.
[130] Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's "Atlas": The Anomic Archive," 134.
[131] *Inter alia,* historian Hilary Jones discusses the Saint Louisian society – and in particular the *métis* – as a third space, whereby she rejects interpretations that see these subjects as mimicking French society.Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa*.
[132] Diop, *Karim, Roman Sénégalais*, 85.

CHAPTER FOUR

Studio practices of the Independence era (1950-60s): On Technology, Modernity and other Myths

What is a myth, today? […]
Myth is a type of speech. […]
Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts;
Myth is neither a lie nor a confession:
It is an inflection.
Roland Barthes, *Myth Today*, (1957)[1]

In *Mythologies,* Roland Barthes considers the creation of myths in contemporary social value systems.[2] He studies the semiology of their articulation in order to conclude that myths are a type of speech that do not necessarily lie, but that perpetuate ideas of society that adhere to the ideology of the ruling class.[3] This process of "mythologisation" then refers to the tendency of socially constructed narratives to become naturalized: suddenly, certain ideas sound 'normal' and like 'common sense.' On the surface, myths do not seem to require any further deciphering, and *there* is where their power lies.

The association of photography with modernity runs deep in the history of art. In the field of African photography, modernity is a term that emerges regularly, but rarely have scholars engaged with its significance in relation to images, photographers and their clients.[4] Manthia Diawara is one of the few scholars who addresses this issue in his study of the work of the

[1] Barthes, "Myth Today," 107; 28.
[2] *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).
[3] Notably Barthes demonstrates this theory with the example of a front cover from Paris Match, a French weekly magazine that showed a black soldier in French uniform saluting.
[4] On modernity as a myth see: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Malian photographer Seydou Keïta.[5] For Diawara, Keïta's work and "the myth of Bamako" are linked umbilically.[6] He explains: "Keïta's Bamako is the Bamako at the birth of modernity in West Africa. Each one of his portraits reveals an aspect of that moment, its mythology and attendant psychology. In his attempt to create great Bamakois "types" with his camera, Keïta participated in shaping the new image of the city."[7] Diawara interprets the photographer's work as a powerful means of negotiating the sitters' desire and anxiety about "modernity."[8] Even when they came from rural areas, by posing before Keïta's lens, Diawara explains, the sitters were transformed into urban subjects: they had "passed the test of modernity."[9] In this sense, photography had a mythological role—one "wrapped with modernity in West Africa."[10] Here the "myth" is not imposed by the ruling class, but one that emerges from the people's imagination.

Let me return to the definition of the terms of this conversation previously mentioned in the Introduction. If the literature on *modernity* and *modernism* is extensive, then that on *alternative* modernities and *global* modernism is even larger, as scholars test these categories against the world's infinite experiences of modernization.[11] As mentioned in the Introduction, I here employ David Harvey's broad definition of modernity as the cultural experience of modernization, and modernism as the aesthetic expression of modernity. To use Harvey's words, "modernism is a troubled and fluctuating aesthetic response to conditions of modernity produced

[5] Diawara, "Talk of the Town."
[6] Ibid., 65.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 67.
[9] Ibid., 70.
[10] Ibid.
[11] The literature on global modernism or alternative modernities is extremely large as it involved scholars writing from different disciplines and looking at different expressions in Africa, Latin America and Asia. A few example include: Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005); Keith P. F. Moxey, "Is Modernity Multiple?," (Columbia University, Department of Art History, Multiple Modernities, 2010).

by a particular process of modernization."[12] In the West, the experience of modernization is generally agreed to include phenomena such as urbanization, communications, industrialization, wage labor and factory systems. However, scholars such as Rasheed Araeen and Salah Hassan have encouraged us to study the local inflections of this global phenomenon.[13] The study of modernity on the African continent, for instance, should include factors such as slavery, colonialism and the struggle to decolonize.[14]

This chapter looks at some of the myths surrounding studio practices of the independence era in Senegal in the 1950s and 60s. It will engage with the associated ideas (mimesis, modernity, urban identity, technology) and the aesthetic principles that defined its significance (poses, eyes expressions, composition, lighting, framing). In order to do so, this chapter will focus on two photographers, Mama Casset and Oumar Ka, who were working respectively in Dakar and Touba between the 1940s and the 1980s. Both very popular, Casset and Ka developed practices that seem antipodal on many accounts. Born to a middle class Saint Louisian family, Casset underwent extensive training with the most important photographers in Dakar and eventually established his own practice in the capital. As an urban photographer, his clientele was the ascending middle-class whose tastes and imaginations were fed and nourished by the burgeoning mass media culture, including popular magazines and cinema.[15]

With a humbler upbringing, Ka is best understood as a self-trained photographer who nonetheless managed to establish a solid practice in the interior of the country, among rural communities. While Casset has been exhibited widely, Ka's work has yet not received scholarly

[12] On modernity: Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, 205. On modernism: "Modernity and Modernism," 23; "Modernization," 99.
[13] Hassan, "African Modernism: Beyond Alternative Modernities Discourse," 454.
[14] Ibid., 459.
[15] Manthia Diawara, "Self Representation in African Cinema," *Nka: journal of contemporary African art* (2007); Bajorek, "'Ça Bousculait!' Democratization and Photography in Senegal."

attention. Casset is celebrated as an artist *tout court*; Ka's contributions, alongside those of other African photographers, remain in the shadow, obfuscated within the clash of urban and rural, art and popular culture. By juxtaposing the work of Mama Casset with that of Oumar Ka, I revisit the association of photography's modernity with urban living and propose instead to expand it to include so called "rural" tastes and styles.[16]

Before discussing the work of Casset and Ka, the Chapter will offer a brief overview on Léopold Sédar Senghor's understanding of photography. The existing literature on studio practices has done little to situate studio photography with relation to emerging ideas of modernity and modernism as articulated by intellectuals, poets and writers from the continent and its diaspora. As studio practices flourished in the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial era, intellectuals on the continent were shaping ideas of modernity in dialogue with other scholars and intellectuals in Europe and the United States.[17] As theories were discussed in the Black Atlantic, Senegal was at the vanguard of the creation of an African modernism thanks in part to President Léopold Sédar Senghor's promotion of the philosophy of Negritude.

Negritude, which was defined by Senghor as "the sum of the cultural values of the Black world," inspired a specific aesthetic and visual vocabulary.[18] Since its inception in the late 1930s, Negritude has generated controversy and debate, especially, but not exclusively, among the African intelligentsia.[19] When Senghor and Aimé Césaire met as students in Paris they were

[16] In this regard Harvey argues that modernism, the aesthetic expression of modernity, after 1848 "was very much an urban phenomenon." Harvey, "Modernity and Modernism," 25.
[17] See for instance: Mamadou Diouf, "Ideas of Africa and the African Presence in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Departmental Colloquium* (Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies; Columbia University, New York, 2010).
[18] Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Linda Chrisman (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 27.
[19] According to philosopher Bachir Diagne, Negritude is "a product of Africa and its diaspora; it is a product of a movement of the Harlem Renaissance; it is also a product of Jean-Paul Sartre, of Henri Bergson, of Lucien Lévy-Brühl, of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, of Ferdinand Georg Frobenius, of Pablo Picasso, of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and of others. It is, in short, the theoretical use of all available means." Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *African*

confronted with political and cultural discrimination. Through Negritude they sought to resist and challenge Western ethnocentrism by identifying African contributions to world civilization.[20] Senghor borrowed the concept of *civilisation de l'universel* from French Jesuit palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.[21] Within the framework of this international community, Senghor believed that Africa had a special part to play and an active contribution to make to the dialogue of cultures. The controversies around the definition of Negritude lay in its rationale, which attempted to define the "essence" of an African identity, while situating it in a global civilization.

Scholars have well documented the close relationship between Negritude and art practice.[22] For Senghor, art was one of Africa's major contributions to the "*civilisation de l'universel*" and one of the most potent triggers for social and economic development.[23] He believed that the implementation of policies supporting the arts would result in his country's emancipation. As such, Senghor wrote extensively on African art, discussing sculptures, paintings, tapestries and poems. A close reading of Senghor's publications however reveals that

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Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude (London; New York: Seagull Books, 2011), 5. Other scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describe Negritude as a form of "strategic essentialism," whereby certain articulations are consciously pushed to their extreme in an effort to fight against domination. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sarah Harasym, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 11-12; Sara Danius, Stefan Tonsson, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *boundary 2* 20, no. 2 (1993): 34-6; 43-4.

[20] In Senghor's words: "The Civilization of the Universal, which will be the culmination of socialization, will not be European civilization—in either its Eastern or Western form—imposed by force, but a biological and psychic miscegenation, a *symbiosis* of the different civilizations. Senghor quoted in: P. H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, *The African Philosophy Reader* (New York; London: Routledge, 1998), 433.

[21] Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Pierre Teilhard De Chardin Et La Politique Africaine*, Association Des Amis De Pierre Teilhard De Chardin (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962).

[22] See for instance: Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960-1995*; "The Ecole De Dakar: Pan-Africanism in Paint and Textile."; "Les Chers Enfants Sans Papa," *Oxford art journal. Oxford.* 19, no. 1 (1996); Grabski, "Painting Fictions/Painting History: Modernist Pioneers at Senegal's Ecole Des Arts."; Cohen, "Masks and the Modern: African/European Encounters in 20th-Century Art."; Ebong, "Negritude: Between Mask and Flag: Senegalese Cultural Ideology and the École De Dakar."

[23] On the African contribution to the Civilization of the Universal see: Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Standards Critiques De L'art Africain," *African Arts* 1, no. 1 (1967): 6; 8. On the relation between cultural and political emancipation see: "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," in *First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists*, ed. Presence Africaine (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1956), 51.

within the rhetoric of Negritude, photography was virtually absent. As Senghor stated in 1970, "Africa teaches that art is not photography."[24] When Senghor wrote this statement he was certainly aware of the work of photographers practicing at his time, or at least of the Casset brothers, who took one of his portraits in the late fifties (fig. 4.1). So why did Senghor not acknowledge their work?

I will argue that as Senghor was trying to define the essence of traditional African art, his objective was to envision and inspire the future of those artforms in an effort to negotiate Africa's relation to both modernity and modernism at the global level. Senghor's struggle to reconcile Africa and Europe, tradition and modernity, mirrors that of photographers as they engaged with those myths in their daily practices, in and out of the studio. The analysis of Negritude—or as Jean-Paul Sartre defined it, "the Negro's being-in-the-world"—vis-à-vis photographic portraits by Casset and Ka will make visible the contradictory impulses of African modernity and liberation.[25]

On the photographic art and mimesis: Léopold Sédar Senghor

Léopold Sédar Senghor was a prolific speaker and writer. Well before he embarked on his political career, Senghor had been outspoken in his passion for literature and poetry. In the mid-1930s, as he was completing his graduate studies in France, he published his first poems.[26] A decade later, when he was elected *député* at the Assemblée nationale française, he started writing speeches and articles that were more political in nature. In 1964, he published the first

[24] "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," 34.
[25] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Black Orpheus," *The Massachusetts Review* 6, no. 1 (1964-5): 36.
[26] Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Prayer to Masks," in *Chants D'ombre: Suivis De Hosties Noires: Poèmes*, ed. Léopold Sédar Senghor (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1956).

volume of a series of five, titled *Liberté.*[27] These tomes gathered hundreds of his essays and prefaces, spanning his whole career from the 1930s—when he co-founded the Negritude movement—to the early 1990s, when he retired to France, having served as the president of Senegal for two terms from 1960 to 1980. These volumes demonstrate the breadth of Senghor's interests, from politics to poetry, from philosophy to art. Throughout his career, art remained a major concern for Senghor, who saw cultural development and socio-political progress as interdependent.[28]

While scholars have written extensively on Senghor's cultural politics, little study has focused on his understanding of specific media, particularly those based on new technologies, such as photography and cinema. In these short articles collected in the volumes, Senghor did not dwell extensively on either of these, but he did mention both. With a close reading of these brief passages, we can reconstruct Senghor's understanding of these technologies and their relation to African art more broadly.

But why should we care about Senghor's idea about photography? Firstly, his writings are some of the very rare recorded articulations by an African intellectual regarding the medium. Secondly, in the hundreds of interviews I conducted in Senegal, the name Senghor popped up again and again. The interviewees might not have read his articles, but they could all refer to an episode when they had photographed him, heard him on the radio or saw him on TV. Some of Senghor's phrasings, such as "*enracinement et ouverture*" or the idea of being rooted in one's history and open to new opportunities, have become mantras that are repeated even in the most informal conversations. Senghor's attitude towards the arts has left such a deep mark on

[27] Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté 1: Négritude Et Humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964).
[28] "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 59.

Senegalese attitudes that tracing his specific rhetoric can give us important clues about the status of photography in Senegal at that time of his presidency.

In his 1970 article, "Negritude, a Humanism of the Twentieth Century," Senghor refers to photography twice as he describes the main tenets of the intellectual movement.[29] His allusion to photography does not derive from an engagement with the possibilities of the medium per se; rather, he introduces photography in a comparative exercise as he attempts to define the "essence" of African art. To define the ontology of African art, Senghor describes what it is not: photographic. Let us read the whole passage:

> This then is Africa's lesson in aesthetics: art does not consist in *photographing nature*, but in taming it, like the hunter when he reproduces the call of the hunted animal. […] Once more, *Africa teaches that art is not photography*; if there are images they are rhythmical. I can suggest or create anything –a man, a moon, a fruit, a smile, a tear– simply by assembling shapes and colors (painting/sculpture), shapes and movement (dance), timbre and tones (music) provided that this assembling is not an aggregation but that it is ordered and in short rhythmical. For it is rhythm—the main virtue of Negritude that gives the work of art its beauty.[30]

At first glance, this excerpt may seem to provide sufficient evidence to incriminate Senghor as a regressive thinker who hurriedly dismissed photography's artistic potential. Yet I would argue that his stance is much more nuanced and potentially more revolutionary than initially perceived. Senghor's statement that "art is not photography" provides a valuable point of departure for a discussion on the relation between representation and the "*réel*"; between photography and (African) art.

If Negritude was broadly described as "the sum of the cultural values of the Black world," in his writings Senghor strove to identify those "values" and situate them in a dialectic relation

[29] Before 1970, Senghor refers to "*l'art photographique*" in his writings at least two other times, in 1939 and in 1967. It is important to note, that while these speeches often tackle different issues, Senghor often reiterated his thoughts in a consistent manner. We thus find in different articles similar phrasing. This was certainly the case when he was talking about photography and African art. "Ce Que L'homme Noir Apporte," in *Liberté 1: Négritude Et Humanisme*, ed. Léopold Sédar Senghor (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 33; "Standards Critiques De L'art Africain," 6.

[30] Emphasis mine. "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," 34.

with Europe. In the field of art, the difference between Europe and Africa hinged on their opposing relation to "*le réel*," or, the real. In Senghor's words: "The European takes pleasure in recognizing the world through *the reproduction of the object*, which is called the subject; the African Negro from *knowing it vitally* through image and rhythm."[31] According to Senghor, since the Greek *kouroi*—a term used for funerary statues representing young men in classical Greek sculpture—the art of the European West has privileged realism, whereby the work is based in "imitation," or mimesis respecting, for instance, average proportions of the body as seen from a distance.[32] Conversely, Africans do not seek to "reproduce" the object but favor an experiential approach to the artwork.

Eventually, Senghor's dissatisfaction with "mimetic art" led him to blame Realism, which together with Impressionism is one of the main triggers for the "decadence of art in the nineteenth century."[33] In 1939, when the Negritude movement was in its infancy, Senghor argued that Realism and Impressionism were "but two aspects of the same mistake," a concept that he reiterates twenty-eight years later in 1967, in the first edition of the journal *African Arts*.[34] Within Senghor's hyperbole, photography becomes the end point, where the image coincides with the object, annihilating any creative intervention on the part of the artist. He continues: "it is

[31] Emphasis mine. The employment of the adverb "vitally" recalls the influence of Bergson on Senghor, an aspect that will be discussed later on. "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 57-8.
[32] The relation between mimesis and traditional African art remains a contested issue. For more on this see: Strother, "A Terrifying Mimesis: Problems of Portraiture and Representation in African Sculpture (Congo-Kinshasa)."; Borgatti, Brilliant, and Wardwell, *Likeness and Beyond: Portraits from Africa and the World*; Alisa LaGamma, "Exhibition Preview: Heroic Africans Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures," *African Arts* 45, no. 1 (2012); Suzanne Preston Blier, "Mimesis," *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 2 (2013).
[33] "Our world is enslaved to matter, that is reason […] this is the cause of the decadence of 19th century art." Senghor, "Standards Critiques De L'art Africain," 67. Photography highly influenced the development of Realism. Artists including Eugène Delacroix used photography in their process of creation; photographic and cropped compositions were borrowed by artists such as Gustave Caillebotte, with his bird's eye views of the Parisian streets; the embrace of the new urban scene through the "rhetorical device of synecdoche, the representation of the whole by the part" was fundamental to realist imagery; Edgar Degas had a radical plan of city themes: "On smoke, smoke of smokers, pipes, cigarettes, cigars, smoke of locomotives, of high chimneys, factories, steamboats, etc. destruction of smoke under the bridges. Steam. In the evening. Infinite subjects. In the cafes, different values of the glass-shades reflected in the mirrors." Nochlin, *Realism*, 158-69.
[34] Senghor, "Standards Critiques De L'art Africain."

the adoration of the "*réel*" that led to a photographic art. At best, the spirit finds satisfaction in analyzing and combining elements from reality."[35] In a similar vein, Senghor dismisses the realist approach employed by, for instance, Socialist art as the sole tool for achieving "truth" in art.[36]

Within this line of argument, Senghor transforms the formula of the image-as-equation into image-as-analogy. Rather than having an image that corresponds to its referent in the world, Senghor promotes an art that points *elsewhere than* the represented object. In his words:

> The African Negro image is therefore not an equation-image but an analogy-image, a surrealist image. [...] The object does not signify what it represents, but what it suggests, what it creates. The elephant is strength, the spider Prudence, horns are the Moon, and the moon is Fertility. Every representation is an image, and the image, I reiterate, is not an equation, but a symbol, an ideogram not only a figure image, but substance—stone, earth, copper, gold, fiber—as well as line and color.[37]

Besides Pablo Picasso, who remains a major inspiration in the articulation of Negritude, Senghor finds an affinity between the "Negro image" and those of the Surrealists, in their shared effort to transcend the immediate material reality and the rational mind.[38] Yet, differently from the Surrealists, the African image leans towards what he calls "*le sous-réalisme,*" that is, what lies underneath material reality: the metaphysical.[39] According to Senghor, André Breton's idea of the Surrealist analogy differs fundamentally from the mystic analogy in that it does not presuppose, beyond the visible, an invisible universe. In this sense, Breton is entirely empirical

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Senghor quoted in Diagne, *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude*, 183.
[37] Senghor, "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 59.
[38] On the influence of Picasso on Negritude see: "Picasso En Nigritie (Inauguration Address, Picasso Exhibition)," in *Seven Stories About Modern Art* ed. Clémentine Deliss (Paris, New York: Flammarion 1995); Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Rhythms: L. S. Senghor's Negritude as a Philosophy of African Art," *Critical Interventions*, no. 1 (2007).
[39] "I have spoken of a Surrealistic image. But, as you might guess, African Negro Surrealism is different from European Surrealism. The European is empiric, the African is mystic and metaphysical." Senghor, "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 59. Senghor also argues: "so Surrealism, or rather *sous-réalisme Negro africaine,* is not empiric like that of the West, but mystic, metaphysic, participating to vitalism through symbolism." "Qu'est-Ce Que La Négritude?," in *Liberte 3: Négritude Et Civilisation De L'universel*, ed. Léopold Sédar Senghor (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 96.

in his approach.[40] The African Surrealist analogy instead "presupposes and manifests the hierarchic universe of vital forces."[41] As an example of this dynamic, Senghor refers to the Baule masks from the Ivory Coast, one of the rare cases in which he describes a specific genre from traditional African art that embodies this suggestive power.[42]

Senghor's statements should not be rashly interpreted as evidence of a regressive attitude.[43] Until the early twentieth century, the appreciation of photography as an art *tout court* was up for debate, to say the least, anywhere in Europe and the US.[44] MoMA began collecting photography in 1930 and, three years later, it organized the first solo exhibition of a photographer, Walker Evans.[45] Resistance to accepting this medium as one of the high arts persisted nonetheless. In Senghor's writing, Western influence, the machine and its technologies, were never completely obliterated or censored. Instead, they were cautiously allowed: "painter or sculptor will on occasion make use of instruments and materials imported from Europe: he will not hesitate to represent *the machine, the pride of the West*: he will go so far as to dress some

[40] "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 59.
[41] Here Senghor is borrowing the idea of the *élan vital* from Henri Bergson. The 'vital impulse' is the original common impulse, which explains the creation of all living species. Ibid.
[42] Senghor often discusses the merits and qualities of traditional African art, but he rarely focuses on specific objects. Although he was certainly familiar with the objects that he saw in France as well as in Dakar at the IFAN, his method was closer to that of the philosopher than that of the art historian who is invested in the analysis of individual works.
[43] During his long career as a patron of the arts, Senghor wrote the foreword to a publication presenting postcards from the late 19th and early 20th century in Senegal. In this work he argues that postcards are essential as a form of "*enracinement*," where the artist can study his/her past. Senghor was an enthusiastic supporter of the project, although he saw these images as documents or "*témoignage historique*" rather than actual works of art. Surprisingly, in the second volume with the preface of Abdou Diouf in 1983 he presents these postcards as "*oeuvre d'art.*" J. Gérard Bosio and Michel Renaudeau, *Souvenirs Du Sénégal*, L'histoire En Image (Dakar, Sénégal: Edition Regard-Visiafric, 1980); *Souvenirs Du Sénégal*, Histoire En Image (Sénégal: Visiafric, 1983). Also, Senghor was responsible for the establishment of the Archives Culturelles where photographers documented the histories and cultures of the country. Cissoko Badara, Personal communication with Joshua Cohen, Dakar Senegal March 2013. Lastly, in 1969, the Galerie 39—the art space in Dakar managed by the Centre Culturel français, organized the exhibition *Photo: Art ou Technique* (Archives Nantes, 186po/1/203).
[44] Douglas Crimp, "The Museum's Old / the Library's New Subject," in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).
[45] *Walker Evans: Photographs of 19th Century Houses [*MoMA Exh. #30f, November 16-December 8, 1933]

ancestral genie in European style."[46] African artists could incorporate these elements in their works but with caution, as the main objective was to "transcend these realities as to express the meaning of the world."[47]

As further evidence of Senghor's acceptance of technology, or mechanical arts, we may review the Report produced during the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists that took place in Rome in 1959. Following the presentation of a series of papers, including one by Senghor, the commission of the Arts produced a report summarizing the shared beliefs and proposals of the participants including a recommendation to explore a medium closely related to photography: cinema.[48] It stated:

> The constructive employment of cinema in the interest of African nationalism and our legitimate cultural, social and spiritual objectives is a goal of great importance and should receive a high priority in the efforts of African men of culture. In every modern nation, cinema serves not only for the purposes of entertainment and leisure, but has become a strategic device for the inculcation of the national aspirations and national character *and serves as the nation's clearest window, on the rest of the world*. Cinema is at the same time an art and an industry.[49]

This report not only acknowledges the power of cinema in shaping the national character, but it also concedes that cinema can be an art. In this sense, we need to appreciate that, for African intellectuals such as Senghor, the issue at stake is not whether technology can be art, but the nature of representation—the relation between subject and object.[50]

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[46] My emphasis. Senghor, "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 59.
[47] This appropriation of Western traditions was mitigated by a genuine skepticism due to the disruptive impact that colonialism had which "modified the deep sources of the indigenous traditional inspiration." Artists could and should reference the West within this effort of openness, but within limits: unconditional acceptance of Western technology could not be exercised precisely when Senghor was promoting the study of the contributions of the black man (1939). This encouragement to turn to the "sources" meant including, for instance, masks, some of which could be found in the Musée de l'IFAN in Dakar.
[48] To a certain extent we could think of tapestry, a genre strongly supported by Senghor as a mechanical art, which also is based on reproduction of a model. Yet, unlike cinema or photography, tapestries are based on handmade, original drawings created by an artist.
[49] Congrès des Écrivains et Artistes noirs, "Resolution " *Présence Africaine: Deuxième Congrès des Écrivains et Artistes noirs* 1, no. 24-5 (1959): 455-6.
[50] On the relation between technology and magic in Africa, see: Strother, ""A Photograph Steals the Soul": The History of an Idea."

Senghor's repeated criticism of Realism as a viable aesthetic for the African artist seems engendered in an understanding of the movement as one that only produces images as objective and impartial representations. Linda Nochlin, *inter alia*, has written extensively in an attempt to sidestep this reductive perception of Realism as a "simulacrum or mirror image of visual reality."[51] Senghor's understanding, or perhaps misunderstanding, of Realism is secondary to his greater ambition: shifting attention from mimesis to experience. Influenced by Henri Bergson, the philosopher who legitimized intuition and experience as forms of knowledge, Senghor wishes to bypass a rationalist approach to art whereby object and subject are distinct.[52] The shift that Senghor is proposing is from an aesthetic practice that "identifies things," to one that "identifies *with* things."[53] Senghor quotes Pierre Schneider, who writes: "art grounded in intelligence identifies things; art grounded in emotion identifies with things. The work is no longer a discourse on a subject but a dialogue with it. Imitation gives way to participation."[54] In line with Bergson, Senghor strives to establish an alternate relationship with the object, one that consists of entering into communication with it, in order to "know [the world] vitally."[55]

Like other early modernists who spurned Realism, Senghor argued that it had led to the

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[51] Art historian Linda Nochlin warned about gross simplification, for realism cannot be a "transparent style, a mere simulacrum or mirror image of visual reality." As with any other style, its relation to phenomenal data—the *donnée*—is complex and mediated. Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," *Art in America* (1983); *Realism*, 13-4.

[52] Bergson convinced many thinkers that the processes of immediate experience and intuition are more significant than abstract rationalism and science for understanding reality. On the relation between Bergson and Senghor see: Diagne, *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude*; *Bergson Postcolonial: L'élan Vital Dans La Pensée De Léopold Sédar Senghor Et De Mohamed Iqbal* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2011).

[53] Schneider quoted in Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Négritude Et Modernité: Ou La Négritude Est Un Humanisme Du Xxe Siècle," in *Liberté 3: Négritude Et Civilisation De L'universel*, ed. Léopold Sédar Senghor (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 239-40.

[54] Schneider quoted in ibid. Senghor argues: "Instead of bringing the object to the subject, intuitive reason integrates the subject into the object; to be more precise, the subject and object identify with each other, which is the true mode of knowledge. This is why art is not, in Black Africa, imitation of appearances or diversion, but a means of knowledge—the most efficient means." Senghor quoted in Diagne, *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude*, 125-6.

[55] Senghor quoted in *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude*, 126. Senghor's phrasing often follows that of Bergson quite closely. Bergson wrote: "the intention is just what the artist tries to regain, in placing himself back with the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model." Bergson quoted in: ibid., 124.

end of art.[56] In his struggle to differentiate African from European aesthetics, Senghor emphasized rhythm, *sous-realism*, and communion with the object as the main strategies that liberate the artist from the burden of representation. I argue that Senghor is neither against Realism nor mechanical arts; rather that, as part of his aesthetic "strategic essentialism," he advances an art practice that functions beyond its referent, through a renewed relation between subject and object. If the Modernists sought the primal—like traditional African art—as an antidote to photography and academicism, Senghor argued for an alternative African art practice based on experience—one that could accommodate the essence of traditional African art and open new possibilities for the artist. These key terms: rhythm, *sous-realism*, and communion with the object, are then just some approaches to embodying his ideal of *enracinement et ouverture.*

Mama Casset: "movement and diagonals"

Mama Casset was born in 1908 to a middle-class Saint-Louisian family. As Dakar replaced Saint Louis as the capital of French West Africa the Cassets, along with many other families, moved to the new epicenter of the economic, political and social life of the colony. Only two years later Mama began to work with a friend of his father, the French photographer Oscar Lataque.[57] Shortly after, in 1925, when his younger brother Salla started to work with Lataque, Casset assisted another French photographer, Tennequin. In the late 1920s he enlisted in the French Air Force. Assigned to the Photographic Department, his main responsibility was carrying out aerial photography surveys of French West Africa. For over ten years Mama Casset

[56] Senghor, "Ce Que L'homme Noir Apporte." Here I am also thinking of Baudelaire, who privileged poetry to Realism since the latter sacrificed a higher and more permanent reality for a more mundane one. Nochlin, *Realism*, 14.
[57] Camille Ostermann, "Mama Casset: Approche Esthetiques De Ses Photographies De Studio" (Thesis (MA), Institut Supérieur des Art et Cultures, Dakar, 2011).

travelled across the region, but no photographs have survived from this period.[58] In 1942, Mama Casset finally opened his own photographic studio, *African Photo*, in the heart of Medina, a popular and populous neighborhood in Dakar.[59] Casset's very quickly became one of the most fashionable studios in Dakar, and indeed the whole country.

The first time Mama Casset was exhibited was not in Europe or the US[60]; in December 1992, six months after Seydou Keïta's portraits were shown for the first time in New York at *Africa Explores*, Mama Casset had his first solo show at the Galerie 39 in Dakar.[61] While it is often assumed that African studio photographers were "discovered" and launched by Western institutions, Casset's case is but one counterexample. The exhibition was organized by the Centre Culturel Français (CCF)—now Institut Français—upon the occasion of the first of three editions of the *Mois de la Photo*. In the late 1980s, a few years before he co-founded Revue Noire, Jean Loup Pivin was working in West Africa as an architect and regularly travelled to Dakar where he met Senegalese photographer and filmmaker Bouna Médoune Seye (1956-).[62] It was Seye who introduced Pivin to the work of Mama Casset.[63] It was Seye who conducted the research interviewing Casset and collecting the works among the photographer's best customers.[64] Following the fire that burned down Casset's studio in 1984, the vintage prints collected and stored by Dakarois families were all that was left of his oeuvre.

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[58] Casset, *Mama Casset*, no page.
[59] He worked there until 1983 when he became blind. The following year his studio burned down with most of his negatives.
[60] Seydou Keïta was exhibited for the first time in Susan Vogel's *Africa Explores*, which opened in New York in May 1991, as "unidentified photographer." On this see: Amselle, *L'art De La Friche: Essai Sur L'art Africain Contemporain*, 150-1;74; 97.
[61] Casset's solo show at the *Moi de la Photo* was not the first exhibition on photography in Dakar. Photography had been exhibited regularly since the *Salon de la Photo* organized in 1961 and 1963 (Archives Nantes 186po/1/158 and ANS). However that was the first time that a "popular photographer" was displayed in an art space, celebrated as an artist.
[62] Bouna Médoune Seye, personal communication, Marseilles, France, August 2011; Dakar, Senegal, May 2013; Jean Loup Pivin, personal communication, Paris, France, July 2011 and August 2013.
[63] Hosti Bertrand, Personal communication via Skype, July 2013.
[64] Bouna Médoune Seye, Personal communication, Dakar, May 2013; Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication Paris, July 2011 and August 2013.

If *Revue Noire*'s broad objective was to document the dynamism of the contemporary African art scene, Mama Casset became one of their leading artists embodying the continent's modernity and sophistication.[65] In his texts, Pivin argued that, unlike other photographers, Mama Casset was a true artist. In his words:

> Mama Casset is not the usual portraitist that you could find in any neighborhood, with his exotic backdrop, the diverse accessories and the poses. […] Mama Casset knew that *he was an artist* and he described himself in these terms—his real name was Kassé. None of his photos was due to hazard; he composed them according to an aesthetic that took every detail into consideration, without losing sight of what was most essential.[66]

Venturing beyond the work of other collectors, Pivin and his team reviewed the works of hundreds and hundreds of African photographers for their publications.[67] Pivin repeatedly explained that Casset's work stood out precisely because of his skills as a photographer.[68] While the current scholarship on African photography seems less concerned with—and even suspicious of—the necessity of elevating the figure of the photographer to that of *artiste*, in the early 1990s, as Pivin recalls, specialists did not believe African photographers existed.[69] As Pivin came across Casset's work, it became imperative to recover his work and articulate his merits.

Casset was certainly neither the first nor the only Senegalese photographer working before the 1960s. By the 1950s, photographic studios were active across the country. In Saint Louis, Meïssa Gaye (1892-1993), who learned photography in Congo while he was working for the military, established one of the most popular studios in the old capital in 1945. Besides Gaye, other photographers such as Doudou Diop, Alioune Diouf, Carestan, J.K., Doro Sy and Mix

[65] Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication, Paris, France, August 2013.
[66] Casset, *Mama Casset Et Les Précurseurs De La Photographie Au Sénégal: Meïssa Gaye, Mix Gueye, Adama Sylla, Alioune Diouf, Doro Sy, Doudou Diop, Salla Casset*, 7-8.
[67] Saint Léon, Pivin, and Fall, *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography*.
[68] Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication, New York, US, May 2014.
[69] Jean Loup Pivin, Personal communication, Paris, France, August 2013.

Gueye also established their studios in Saint Louis in the 1950s.[70] Building on the material collected by Revue Noire, during my research in Senegal I travelled across the country to identify some of the leading photographers working outside Dakar and Saint Louis. From my fieldwork, it seems that, particularly in Thiès and Kaolack, photographers were still very active.[71]

In an archival shot from 1954 (fig. 4.2), professional and amateur photographers pose in Thiès on the occasion of the celebration of Bastille Day. This group portrait is one of the rare images capturing photographers "at work," giving us a sense of their professionalism and collegiality. In another shot, also from the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence, a colonial administrator Vermot-Gauchy documented a market of photographic prints, this time in Kaolack in 1955 (fig. 4.3-4). In my interviews with photographers, their descendants and clients, it emerged that this profession was closely tied to their ability to remain mobile, either to reach different clienteles or acquire the latest materials. Most of these photographers moved across the country and in some instances around the world.[72] They were aware of each other's work and attended workshops organized, for instance, by Kodak in Dakar.[73] Often, as in Saint Louis, professional photographers held regular meetings to discuss and establish their market prices, both in order to support each other's production and avoid the development of a monopoly.[74] Emmanuel Mbengue, a photographer and photo-lab technician in Dakar, explained to me that photographers often tailored their work to different urban communities such as the

[70] During my research, I managed to interview most of the photographers listed or their descendants. Unfortunately however, it has been harder to collect a significant number of works from their oeuvres. In most cases, the archives of these photographers were either destroyed or dispersed. More research needs to be done on their work. Bajorek has also contributed to the identification of these photographers. Bajorek, "Photography and National Memory: Senegal About 1960."; "'Ça Bousculait!' Democratization and Photography in Senegal."
[71] In Kaolack, since the 1940s we have Le Fièvre and Massamba Seck. In Thiès, it seems that the earliest photographers were all Beninese: Kenon Candin, Tognisse Damien and Cheikh Bey.
[72] Here I am thinking of Mama and Salla Casset who travelled to France and Mecca regularly.
[73] Abdou Fary, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, May 2014.
[74] Son of Alioun Diouf, Personal communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, May 2013.

Lebanese, Catholics and Muslims.[75] While in Senegal ethnic or religious communities are never segregated—it is common to see families in which siblings identify with different religions—Mbengue explained that certain photographers worked specifically with certain communities so that they could adapt to the community's tastes and social practices—for example, a Catholic wedding, or a ceremony in the Mosque.[76] In short, well before Independence, photography was a lucrative and flourishing business, and photographers refined their strategies to develop and expand their clientele beyond Dakar and Saint Louis.

Considering the abundance of studio photographers, why should we focus on one, Mama Casset? Firstly, Mama was one of the most popular photographers in the 1950 and 60s in Dakar. Casset's reputation emerged during my interviews and became particularly apparent in the abundance of his photos preserved in the albums and framed pictures belonging to individual families. In conducting research both in Dakar and across the country, it was relatively common to encounter a vintage print by Mama Casset. Mama Casset, alongside his younger brother Salla Casset, was truly one of the most productive Senegalese photographers.[77] More recently, his works have been collected by private institutions such as Revue Noire, and are now entering major international museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[78] It is rare to have the opportunity of studying an extensive body of work by a single author in Senegal, where the large majority of photographers' archives have been lost or destroyed.[79] The existence of these prints

[75] Emmanuel Mbengue, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, December 2012.
[76] For instance, the Lebanese photographer Ahmed Safieddine, active in Dakar since the 1970s, worked mostly for the Senegalese. Emmanuel Mbengue, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, December 2012.
[77] The popularity of the Casset brothers emerged repeatedly in interviews, but also became evident outside of them, as I found a bus stop in Dakar near *Marche Tillen* was named after them—*Arrêt Casset*——precisely because everybody would know their studio.
[78] Other collections include Mascelloni in Italy, Centre de recherches et de documentation du Sénégal (CRDS) in Saint Louis.
[79] Here I am thinking of Meïssa Gaye, Carestan, Le Fierve, Massamba Seck and Salla Casset. Sele Gaye, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, May 2013; Salioum Mbake Diop (Zal), Personal Communication, Kaolack,

not only allows us to understand the general trends and tastes of the periods, but also to appreciate the photographer's unique vision.[80] As we will see, Casset introduced formal strategies and techniques that distinguished his practice from that of his colleagues. These will be noted in the pro-filmic—i.e. what is placed in front of the camera, like sitters and props—and in what lies "behind the camera," that is, light sources and framing devices to compose the portraits. In his mise-en-scène, Casset capitalized on his sitters' mastery of a repertoire of gestures that included hand movements, eye-expressions and poses.

In one of his most memorable portraits (fig.4.5), a woman is posing in Casset's studio in the late 1950s. Compared to earlier portraits such as the *cartes-de-visite*, the sitter is no longer holding a frontal pose. Rather, she is standing in a three-quarter view with her elbows resting on a diagonal surface. In line with her body's orientation, her gaze is directed elsewhere than the photographer. She is staring forward, with her eyes slightly raised and her eyelids slightly closed. With her chin resting on her loosely interlaced hands, together with the photographer she has chosen a pose that allows her to display her jewelry—bracelets and watch—and the dark henna decorating her fingertips.[81] Also, on her lower lip, the henna augments the volume of her lips, that hint to a subtle smile.

In this portrait the photographer masterfully plays with the possibilities offered by the latest trends and technology. Placed to the right of the photographer, the light source illuminates the sitter from above, producing strong shadows under her right eyebrow and chin. This creates a contrast whereby her left side receives most of the light: from her hair to her forehead, from her

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Senegal, March 2013; Abdoulaye Casset, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, May 2013; Robert Carestan, Personal Communication, Saint Louis, Senegal, May 2013.

[80] This exercise is essential to, for instance, differentiate photographic practices not only between individual photographers but also different West African regions.

[81] On the collaboration between photographer and sitter see: Elizabeth Bigham, "Issues of Authorship in the Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita," *African Arts* 32, no. 1 (1999).

left cheek to her wrist, we can appreciate the resulting sharpness of the image and the photographer's ability to manipulate and modulate its definition. The combination of her pose and the strong light allows us to take pleasure in her attire, whose luxury is accentuated by its ability to shine and sparkle under the lens. The bright and glittering surfaces of her earrings and dress are compensated by the smoothness of her skin and the sobriety of her perfectly oval face that absorbs rather than reflects light.[82] The rest of her body, particularly her chest and left elbow, are outside the suffused cone of light. In playing with the camera's aperture and focal length, Casset manages to blur the background, as well as those body parts that are less lit. He makes the sitter's face his point of focus by using a shallow depth of field. Unlike other photographers such as Seydou Keïta, Casset creates a formal subordination within his composition, whereby the facial plane gains prominence, as it is sharper than the rest of the composition. In balancing chiaroscuro and definition, Casset creates a dynamic image that enthrones the sitter, like an actress under the spotlight.

In various interviews conducted in Senegal, one of the features of this image that was often discussed related to the sitter's eyes. Interviewees described her look as "*lamp sall*," a Wolof term that indicates a way of opening and closing ones' eyes in a manner that is perceived as intriguing and attractive.[83] To a Western viewer, this description may recall the so-called "bedroom eyes," à la Marilyn Monroe (fig.4.6). Besides the fact that these two expressions do not perfectly match—Marilyn holds her chin up and significantly lowers her eyelids, while the Senegalese sitter is looking up and her lips are sealed—they also imply different ideas of sensuality and seduction that are culturally specific; "*lamp sall*" or "*lamsal"* is just one of the Wolof idioms used to describe eye expressions.

[82] In various interviews it emerged that the use of cosmetic powder was very common to limit the shining effect.
[83] Soxna Noley Kumba Faye, Personal communication, Touba, May 2014; Abdourahmane Niang, Personal communication, Dakar, May 2014.

In another portrait (fig.4.7), the female sitter holds her body in three quarter view for the photographer. With her arms crossed, she puts her weight on her right forearm, resting on a horizontal surface. In this case too, the pose allows her to display her numerous bracelets, rings and henna; but again, the promotion of her economic prosperity is only one layer of the composition. The lights, this time positioned high up to the left of the photographer, brighten her face, making her skin shimmer and highlighting the "rings" on her neck, another sign of beauty.[84] This woman was probably older than the previous one, and embodies many features of the *jonge,* a Wolof word that describes a married woman whose privileged status is annunciated by her elegance and her generous size. Her eyes are not looking away from the photographer; rather, they are staring in the direction of the viewer. However, slightly lowered and to the side, they do not quite meet our gaze. This expression has been described as "*ragañu*" or "*rageju*" a Wolof term that describes the movement from side to side. Here the eyes are not fully open (*xulli* in Wolof), but slightly lowered (*xeef* in Wolof).[85] This gaze allows the viewer to contemplate her, while she can look away, confident of her beauty.

Let me contrast these two images, where the movement of the eye defines the tone of the portrait, with a third one (fig.4.8). The pose here is strikingly similar to the previous ones. In this case however, the gaze is different: the sitter is looking straight ahead, facing the photographer and the viewer. While in certain cultures, such as the Pende in Congo, it would have been undesirable for a woman to be photographed for a private portrait with her eyes fully open and looking straight ahead, in Senegal a variety of poses were common, including a frontal gaze.[86]

[84] Necks sculpted with lines forming concentric cylinders are perceived in Senegal as well as across West Africa as a sign of beauty.
[85] Soxna Noley Kumba Faye, Personal communication, Touba, May 2014; Abdourahmane Niang, Personal communication, Dakar, May 2014.
[86] Z.S. Strother studied the importance of physiognomy among the Pende and paid close attention to the role of eyes. See: Z. S. Strother, "Invention and Reinvention in the Traditional Arts," *African Arts* 28, no. 2 (1995): 27-8; *Inventing Masks: Agency and History in the Art of the Central Pende*, 101-54. For more reading on physical and

Besides the use of lighting and posing to carefully frame the presence of the sitter, Mama Casset's portraits also distinguish themselves for the dynamism of their framing. In a number of vintage prints, Mama Casset experiments with a particularly dramatic composition, whereby the camera is turned at an almost forty-five-degree angle to the plane of reference. In one case (fig.4.9), the diagonal that joins the print's opposite corners functions as the main vertical axis for the composition. The photographer brings the camera close enough to capture the female sitter's face and hands, but this time does not blur the background, as we can catch a glimpse of the monochromatic curtains that were used as backdrop. In another portrait, Casset employs the same framing technique, turning the camera clockwise a little less than forty-five degrees (fig.4.10). The diagonal here organizes the composition and functions as the central axis around which the two female sitters pose. The light, now even stronger, lightens their skin complexion and creates behind them strong dark shadows in the folds of the backdrop. The rhythmic repetition of the parallel shadows reinforces the dynamism of the diagonal orientation of the portrait.

In his writing Jean-Loup Pivin discussed Casset's framing strategy: **"**Due to the way the bodies are angled, or through the composition, the tight frames and sometimes low-angle shots, he brings a completely new dynamism to the images."[87] Indeed, Casset's aesthetic seems to respond to the imperative that was inspiring so many photographers between the 1930s and 60s: "movement and diagonals."[88] It was the Hungarian photographer Martin Munkacsi who used these two words to describe the aesthetic motivating his practice, along with that of popular

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metaphysical ideas of beauty in Africa: Sylvia Ardyn Boone, *Radiance from the Waters: Ideals of Feminine Beauty in Mende Art*, Yale Publications in the History of Art (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 81-154.

[87] Casset, *Mama Casset*, no page.

[88] As photo historian Antonella Pelizzari argues, the Italian magazine *Lei* was very much influenced by an aesthetic that Hungarian photographer Martin Munkacsi summed up with two words: "movement and diagonals." Munkacsi quoted in Maria Antonella Pelizzari, "Make-Believe: Fashion and Cinelandia in Rizzoli's Lei (1933–38)," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2015): 46.

magazines and films. In the case of Casset, I encountered this formal strategy mostly in his portraits of female sitters. The added dynamism of the composition then speaks to the sitter's modernity—and matches them with compositions they may have seen in magazine advertisements or cinematic shots.

Cinema was a popular form of entertainment among the Senegalese, particularly with those living in the major urban centers such as Saint Louis, Dakar and Thiès. Filmmaker and cinema historian Paulin Vieyra noted that, only five years after the Lumière brothers invented the *cinématographe,* their film *L'arroseur arrosé* arrived in Dakar.[89] By the late 1930s, in Senegal alone there were seventy cinemas equipped for showing films shot in 35 and 16mm.[90] The Senegalese watched a wide variety of films, including dramas, musicals and Westerns.[91] Films did not arrive only from Europe and the US; North Africa and India were also major producers.[92]

The impact and reception of films with global circulation is a phenomenon that demands further investigation. Hollywood cinema has often been denounced as a form of "hegemonic modernism" that dominated the international market, imposing the American ideals onto other cultures. Conversely, cinema historian Miriam Hansen presents the Hollywood genre as the first global vernacular. She argues that classical Hollywood succeeded in its global reach not because of "its presumably universal narrative form but because it meant different things to different

[89] Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, *Le Cinéma Au Sénégal* (Bruxelles, Belgique; Paris: OCIC; L'Harmattan, 1983), 18.
[90] These do not count the film projections organized by cultural centers. Ibid., 18; 35.
[91] The first African film that was distributed in Senegal was *Le Mandat* by Ousmane Sembène in 1969. Ibid., 25-6. One of the reasons for the late production of films by African directors—the first "African" film was produced in 1955 by Paulin Vieyra—was the active censorship of cinema by the French colonial administration that both controlled the films circulating in the region and limited the ability of Africans to produce their own. Paul S. Vieyra, *Le Cinéma Et L'afrique* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1975), 113. On film censorship in West Africa, see also: Odile Georg, "The Cinema, a Place of Tension in Colonial Africa: Film Censorship in French West Africa," *Afrika Zamani : revue annuelle d'histoire africaine* 15-6 (2007-8).
[92] On Indian films in Senegal see: Gupta Dhruba, *African Cinema: A View from India* (Jamshedpur: Celluloid Chapter, 1994), 52; 80.. Isolde Brielmaier studies the influence of Indian and Hollywood cinema in Kenyan photographic practices Isolde Brielmaier, ""Picture Taking" and the Production of Urban Identities on the Kenyan Coast, 1940-1980" (Thesis (Ph.D.), Columbia University, 2003), 143-9.

people and publics, both at home and abroad."[93] Its popularity derived from its ability to articulate a particular experience and mediate "competing cultural discourses on modernity and modernization."[94] This could have been the case in Senegal, where Hollywood was certainly popular although not particularly legible. Similarly to other Arab or Indian films, if movies were translated or subtitled at all it would have been in French. While being Senegal's official language, the majority of Senegalese still spoke other languages such as Wolof and Pulaar, and only the elite would have been able to read or understand the subtitles. Regardless of this linguistic limit, these films were popular and widely consumed among the Senegalese who, whenever possible, collected and displayed images of film stars, whether North African or from elsewhere, in the interiors of their living spaces (fig. 4.11-12). The cinematic experience had, therefore, become part of their imagination.

In a short article on the relation between cinema and photography, the literary and cultural studies scholar Manthia Diawara acknowledges the influence that cinema had on Malian studio practice during the independence era.[95] One of Diawara's most important contributions to our understanding of African photography is precisely that of situating these practices in a broader cultural scene that connected, for instance, West Africa to African American cultural production—music to photography, photography to cinema.[96] In his account, Diawara is less interested in the formal overlaps between these different genres and media, yet he offers an invaluable roadmap for future research.[97] Can we effectively study photography in Africa without assessing its relation to other mass media such as cinema and popular magazines?

[93] Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/ Modernity* 6.2 (1999): 68.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Diawara, "The 1960s in Bamako: Malick Sidibé and James Brown."; "Self Representation in African Cinema."
[96] "The 1960s in Bamako: Malick Sidibé and James Brown."; "Self Representation in African Cinema."
[97] Unfortunately Diawara wrote only two articles. Bajorek has started writing about his but mostly in relation to political democratization. More research has to be conducted on the relation between the two. Bajorek, "'Ça Bousculait!' Democratization and Photography in Senegal."

Magazines such as *Bingo* offered a fertile platform for photographers such as Casset.[98] The writer Ousmane Socé Diop founded the magazine in 1953, as he noticed a gap in the market of the francophone colonies.[99] Published in Dakar, *Bingo* was the first illustrated Senegalese magazine that was destined for a mass distribution across Africa, and even beyond. As Jennifer Bajorek has pointed out, particularly in its first ten years, *Bingo* capitalized on its readers' love of photography. In the inaugural issue Diop wrote: *"Bingo* is the reflection of African life. Its aim is to capture in images the present-day activity and immortal beauty of black Africa. Read it […] Write and tell us what you think. […] Participate in its life by sending us your photos."[100] Not only were readers encouraged to send in their photos from across the continent, but professional photographers participated too, illustrating *Bingo*'s articles with their own images. The magazine's credits report a long of list of contributing photographers, and needless to say Mama Casset was one of them.[101] In one instance Casset included a short description of his studio where customers could find: "Everything for photography. Portraits-Enlargements. Photographic reportages. Photo buffs. Expeditions to the interior." [102] As previously described, Casset had a strong foundation in portrait and aerial photography, but he had also developed the skills to photograph social and political events, and played with an anthropological perspective, conducting "expeditions" and documenting the interior of the country where, ironically, other photographers such as Oumar Ka were working in earnest, rather than as ethnographers. *Bingo*

[98] In 1953 Ousmane Socé Diop the writer of *Karim,* founded the magazine *Bingo.* Scholars are beginning to study the overlaps between photography and magazines. Besides Bajorek, for specific readings on *Bingo* see *Anonymous, "La Presse En Afrique Au Sud Du Sahara; La Presse En Afrique De L'ouest; L'agence De Presse Senegalaise," Afrique 19 (1962); Tsitsi Ella Jaji, "What Women Want: Selling Hi-Fi in Consumer Magazines and Film," in Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); "Bingo: Francophone African Women and the Rise of the Glossy Magazine," in Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday, ed. Stephanie Newell and Onookome Okome (New York and London Routledge, 2014).*
[99] Bajorek, "'Ça Bousculait!' Democratization and Photography in Senegal," 146.
[100] Ibid., 142.
[101] Ibid., 143.
[102] This advertisement is interesting because it renders the breadth of Casset's activity that was not limited to studio practices. Events and documentary photography were also part of it, but more research is required. Ibid.

included advertisements for photographers, as well as photographic material and general products, which along with the photos from professionals and amateurs, helped shape the aesthetic and significance of portraiture in Senegal (fig. 4.13-4).

Compared to earlier portraits, where sitters posed frontally and photographers used natural light, Mama Casset plays with composition and artificial lighting, employing the latest artistic strategies and technologies. In his portraits, Casset selectively employs backdrops and props. In most cases backdrops are monochromatic, and their purpose is not that of projecting the sitter onto another reality, but rather to function as a muted device to make the sitter stand out. Casset manipulated the depth of field, blurring the textiles or using strong lights to cast shadows onto the them, creating patters in order to enhance the dynamism of the portrait. The "bareness" of the background and paucity of props draws attention to the richness of the sitters' attires and their sophisticated body language. It was however, Casset's ability to work behind the camera that transformed the pro-filmic into an announcement of the sitter's modernity. The photographer's intervention is far from subtle, as he boldly uses light and framing. These details suggest the photographer's conscious exploration of light as material. Light, poses and composition were his favored tools in crafting a portrait.

Mama Casset's exploration of lighting, as well as framing, was strongly influenced by cinematic aesthetics and imagery from popular magazines.[103] The photographer Munkacsi summarized this aesthetic as the interplay of "movement and diagonals," but in the case of

[103] While scholars have documented the relation between the photographic still and cinematic image in Western cinema, within the African context, this relation has only been briefly studied by Diawara. On this matter see: Jan-Christopher Horak, *Making Images Move: Photographers and Avant-Garde Cinema* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); David Campany, *Photography and Cinema* (London: Reaktion books, 2008); Quentin Bajac, "The Age of Distraction: Photography and Film," The Museum of Modern Art,, http://www.moma.org/interactives/objectphoto/assets/essays/Bajac.pdf.

Casset it may also recall Senghor's idea of the "rhythmic."[104] Senghor describes the rhythm as that "which saves the words from that mechanical regularity which breeds monotony."[105] Casset's "rhythmic" compositions were certainly influenced by the cinematic close-up, but also by his practice of aerial photography, where he certainly played with perspective and abstract fields. Lastly, if Senghor argued that art should "transcend reality," paradoxically, portraiture is based on theatricality: a constant exercise in moving beyond the ordinary, and projecting something that is outside and beyond one's daily reality. In this regard Tobias Wendl argued:

> The studios serve as dream chambers permitting escape from the constraints of tradition and from the burdens of social roles and class. Here, in the twilights between published and private, subversive plays and inversions are permitted. Photographs create room for fantasy, spaces for exploring and playing with new identities, spaces for staging vernacular visions of the modern self.[106]

While recalling Bakhtinian ideas of carnivalesque inversions, Wendl's approach renders the primacy of the experiential dimension in photographic practices in West Africa, an aspect also delineated by Oguibe.[107] In the primacy of the experiential we can see an echo of the Senghorian understanding of art as being grounded in the exchange between object and sitter.

Oumar Ka: Rural Modernities

Since the early 1990s, when the first African studio photographers' work entered the international art market, scholars have conducted research across the continent, diversifying

[104] I would argue, for instance, that this is one of the main differences between Malian photographers such as Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keïta and their Senegalese counterparts, who rarely employed elaborate backdrops using patterned textiles. Backdrops were used, but in most cases they were plain textiles. In the 1970s, the painted backdrops seem to return to vogue.
[105] Senghor, "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 60.
[106] Wendl, "Entangled Traditions: Photography and the History of Media in Southern Ghana," 88.
[107] Ibid.; Olu Oguibe, "The Photographic Experience: Toward an Understanding of Photography in Africa," in *Flash Afrique!*, ed. Thomas Miessgang, Barbara Schröder, and Kunsthalle Wien. (Wien, Göttingen: Steidl 2002); M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 1st Midland book ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984).

these practices and their authors.[108] In the case of Senegal, for instance, Frédérique Chapuis published the monograph of Oumar Ly, a photographer working in Podor in the North of Senegal in the 1960s.[109] Chapuis's research, which brought to light Ly's rich archive of portraits shot in the Fouta region, is one of the few examples demonstrating that, by the 1960s, photography was no longer under the monopoly of urban photographers living in cosmopolitan cities. The study of the work of photographers in the interior of the country reveals photography's increasing popularity and its ability to accommodate different tastes and experiences.

In 2012, while conducting research in Touba with the photographer Ibrahima Thiam, we were introduced to Oumar Ka by an elder in the neighborhood. Oumar Ka was born in 1930 in Kel, near Tiwawone.[110] Having attended the Quranic, rather than the French School, Ka started working as a carpenter in Thiès, moving first to Djourbel and then to Kaolack, where his father lived.[111] In 1959 he met the photographer Cheikh Kane in Kaolack.[112] Kane offered to teach him how to take photographs, and eventually gave him a Rolleiflex camera and fifteen negatives.[113] The following day Ka went to Kolobane, a village thirty-four kilometers from Touba, and started taking his first portraits. Kolobane was situated in a strategic position at the heart of the peanut trade: each Monday, merchants and buyers came from neighboring villages and towns for its weekly market. On market days Ka would take portraits, and the following week, he would bring the prints for his clients. Each Monday, the market attracted a diverse clientele motivated by its

[108] In her dissertation, Keller maintains that she wants to consider "photography in Mali in terms of urban and rural perspectives." Keller, "Visual Griots: Social, Political, and Cultural Histories in Mali through the Photographer's Lens," 7. Throughout her dissertation she discusses this tension between rural and urban photography. Ibid., 48; 56-7; 96; 382. Eventually she argues that, for certain portraits, as well as for various photographers including Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé, "traditional and modern, rural and urban, indigenous and foreign elements comfortably coexisted." Ibid., 118; 477. Unlike Ka, who argued that he never met any resistance, in her research Keller documented a mistrust of photography in rural areas in Mali ibid., 442-3.
[109] Frédérique Chapuis and Oumar Ly, *Portraits De Brousse: Podor, 1963-1978* (Trézélan: Filigranes, 2009).
[110] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, April 2013.
[111] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, April 2013.
[112] Cheikh Kane had been trained by the French photographer Le Fievre, who was also based in Kaolack.
[113] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, April 2014.

products and forms of entertainment, such as the weekly wrestling match, also called *la lutte*—Senegal's national sport. Ka was certainly not the only photographer, but as his colleagues came and went, he established a solid clientele over a period of years and across the region. On his way to Kolobane, he regularly visited neighboring villages, expanding his network of clients.[114] Eventually in 1968, Ka opened his studio in Touba, ending his itinerant practice (fig. 4.15). In this chapter, I will focus primarily on his earlier practice. Between 1959 and 1968, Ka produced a large number of portraits that, unlike those of his colleagues, he has carefully preserved. Also, unlike many of his colleagues, Ka developed a consistent style that differs dramatically from that of Mama Casset: one that favors the background over the foreground, environment over the sitter.

In an undated portrait (fig. 4.16), a woman sits on a chair. Her voluminous *boubou* matches her headscarf. On her wrist are two silver bracelets that match her ring and earring. The sitter is turning her face towards the viewer, but her eyes are not quite meeting ours as they focus slightly to the right of the photographer. Behind her Ka has arranged a textile to function as a backdrop. Yet the picture frame is much larger than the area covered by the monochromatic textile. Ka purposefully included in his picture the materiality of the wall behind the sitter: on one side, we notice the undulating aluminum door, reflecting the daylight; on the other, a white wall features a design that recalls traditional brickwork.[115] The combination of these three surfaces—the aluminum panel, the cotton textile and the wall—provides a rich texture with its different tonalities of grey and varied levels of reflectivity and opacity. In his composition, Ka surrounds the sitter with "space." The camera does not get as close to the sitter as Mama Casset's. Ka maintains a consistent and respectful distance from his sitters, allowing him to include their surroundings. Yet that "empty space," enveloping the sitter, would have terrified the urban

[114] Some of the villages he mentioned included Bane, Gayna, Banan and Sadjo Tayifi.
[115] From the image it is not clear if the decorations are painted on the wall or rather the wall is covered with linoleum displaying that pattern.

photographer, who sought to capture "movement and diagonals."

In another of Ka's close shots, a man is also posing in front of a backdrop (fig. 4.17). This time, the patron is a young man sitting sideways. He wears a white ensemble and holds a pose that allows him to display his watch and ring, both on his left hand. These ornaments, however, are not the fulcrum of the image, as we can barely see the profile of his silver ring and only his leather watchband. The gravitas of the image is placed elsewhere: his gaze is focused on it; his left arm is holding it. In the backdrop behind him a diagonal fold echoes the angle of the man's bent arm, directing our attention to the mysterious object. The composition builds a visual suspense, until we look closely enough and realize that the man's meditation is upon a comb.

Once again, in this shot Ka observes his sitter from a considerate distance. He does not frame the portrait close to the sitter's body, but includes the wall behind him, this time completely covered by a backdrop. The image's texture is not achieved with the juxtaposition of different surfaces, but by including the backdrop, whose small folds and creases cast soft shadows on the textile. Dramatic light and framing are not employed to manipulate the viewer's perception; rather, an economy of means allows the photographer to build at once a visual tension and a contemplative tone.

Working as an itinerant photographer forced Ka to learn to use very few props: he could travel with his camera and backdrop; those were his only tools. Yet, as it often happens, these limitations persuaded Ka to work creatively. Rather than playing with special effects and fancy objects, Ka improvised with and capitalized on what his environment offered him. His portraits are never only about the sitter. If Casset blurred and showed as little of his background as possible, in Ka's portraits, the space that surrounds and situates his sitters is integral to the composition—an aesthetic that his sitters also seemed to appreciate.

In another portrait (fig. 4.18), a male sitter poses outdoors. He is standing in a three quarter view. There is no jewelry or elegant textiles to look at. On the contrary, he is wearing a shirt, leather sandals and loose fitting pants in a local style, called *chaya* or *thiaya*. This portrait was not dictated by a special occasion, religious holiday or social event for which the sitter would have worn his best clothing. Most likely, the sitter posed during a short break on a normal workday. The man's clothing suggests that he was probably a mason who commissioned the portrait one day, any day. For this portrait, Ka chooses an even wider angle. The sitter is standing at the center of the composition, in front of the familiar backdrop, but the picture plane is much wider than the area covered by the textile. We see the sand of the streets of Touba and its overcast sky. In the background an aluminum panel functions as a wall, enclosing the courtyard of a building complex behind the sitter. As in previous images, Ka plays with different textures and surfaces—the uneven white sand, the shining metallic fence and the cloudy sky—to create patterns that modulate and enrich the composition. The insertion of the backdrop, tiny in comparison to the vast semi-desert landscape, locates the sitter and defines this image as a formal portrait.

This sense of emptiness—generated by the paucity of props and unequal ratio of space occupied by sitter and landscape—is rendered even more extreme in two portraits of male sitters (figs. 4.19-20). The sitters are positioned in the center of the composition, while the architectural environment dominates the picture plane. The man wearing a *boubou* poses in front of a concrete building under construction; the other man, in a loose shirt and trousers, chose to stand by a bare wall. In both cases, we barely perceive the shapes and volumes of the architectural structures. Our eye is not free to grasp the building's full form or wander into the distance: the buildings' walls function simply as backdrops, and in only one case can we perceive a small glimpse of sky.

But the cemented surfaces that confine our view do not produce a claustrophobic effect. Rather, the texture of their materiality paradoxically renders these surfaces less dense. The lack of volumes and shadows flattens the composition, situating the sitter in an almost abstract environment. This sense of abstraction is both formal and factual, as the photographer does not provide significant details of the location, which particularly in figure 4.20, could be any wall, anywhere.

These compositions, which are rather common in Ka's portraits, stand in stark contrast with Mama Casset's and the work of other urban photographers', who by the 1960s tended to privilege close-ups and an aesthetic of abundance and opulence, visible in the lavish props and sitters' gestures. In a number of interviews conducted between 2012 and 2014, Ka stated that he generally took photos between five and seven o'clock in the evening when the light was not too strong. Since he did not have a flash with him, he could not shoot too close to his sitters.[116] Yet, these long shots cannot be justified only by his lack of lighting tools. They indicate the photographer's interest in his environment. Ka admitted that taking portraits outside the studio was much more challenging than within an enclosed space, where eventually he did employ lights and flash.[117]

Ka explained that he enjoyed including the environment, or what he called "the décor,"[118] in his portraits. When I saw these compositions for the first time, I asked him if he would crop them, to which he immediately replied that since he was out in the villages he wanted to show that he was *not* in the studio. Not convinced of his answer, over the years I posed him the same question again and again, only to get the same answer. He admitted once that in a few cases his

[116] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, May 2014. He also added, that precisely because he did not have a flash he appreciated the portraits by Mama Casset who could afford to make such close portraits.
[117] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, April 2014.
[118] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, December 2012 and January 2013.

patrons asked him to crop the image tighter to the sitter's profile, but that otherwise they appreciated his style.[119] What Ka described as "décor" included the representation of local architecture and natural elements. With the only exception being a few snapshots by the *métis* photographer discussed in Chapter Three, landscape sceneries are extremely rare in Senegalese and West African photography before the 1970s.[120] In the case of Oumar Ka, among his hundreds of negatives from the 1960s and 70s, the majority captures the sitter in a rural or built environment; about a quarter portray his clients in nature.

In one example (fig. 4.21), five men pose in the middle ground in the Senegalese savanna. Around them we see the dry underbrush, the medium sized thorn trees and in the distance the tall kapok trees, locally called *fromager*. The shot is so long that the sitters' faces can hardly be seen. Four are looking at the photographer, while one of the kneeling men is looking at a bottle—though it is not clear what kind of bottle. Four are wearing jackets and shirts; the standing man to the left wears a long-sleeved t-shirt. Probably taken during one of the market days in Kolobane, perhaps the sitters were working and this portrait had not been premeditated, unlike those commissioned from Mama Casset. In Dakar, sitters anticipated their portrait for days before going to the studio, choosing their outfits, make-up, coiffures and jewelries—borrowing from friends and relatives whenever necessary. Having one's portrait taken was a serious endeavor. In this sense, Ka's practice functions very differently from urban studio photography, allowing the space for improvisation and providing more candid depictions of the sitters' immediate realities.

Ka took numerous pictures of subjects in their work-spaces (fig. 4.22-23). His portraits render the stratification and variety of the communities in the Baol region. These are no longer only middle-class urban sitters, but working class and rural subjects too. All of these groups

[119] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, December 2012 and January 2013.
[120] Senegalese seem more interested in portraits of people rather than landscapes or objects. That partly explains the early popularity of portraiture, versus the late exploration of landscape photography.

equally valued photography, a medium that allowed them to express their articulation of what modernity looked like—one that could include, for instance, flat grassland as well as concrete buildings.

In another case, two women are also standing in the savanna (fig. 4.24). They are wearing matching dresses: dark wrap skirts with tiny white decorations, with tops that echo the same color scheme. They seem to be young, unmarried women, who participated in some kind of social event requiring matching dress. Their hair is not covered with elaborate wigs or fancy headdresses. Rather it is combed naturally. The sitters are, once again, posing in the middle ground of a vast landscape. The sandy road they stand on bifurcates in two directions. Just behind them, as the vegetation takes over, if we look closely enough we perceive the tips of a village's thatch-roof houses among the tall trees. These homes, traditionally made with straw, function as the backdrop for a number of portraits (fig. 4.25). As the two women stand in the road with the village at their back, one of them is holding a small piece of luggage in her left hand. That object projects these sitters as existing *elsewhere*, but we do not know where.

In interviews I conducted in Dakar, the sitters in Oumar Ka's portraits were immediately identified as "*villageois,"* or villagers.[121] Abdurrahman Niang, a Saint Louisian tailor, mentioned that an *originaire* would have worn more "*ingrédients*."[122] What he meant was that an urban dweller, and certainly a Saint Louisian, would have worn more jewelry. The photograph would have been more formally articulated, with props, gazes, and gestures. In many cases, Ka's "emptiness" was disdained; the inclusion of landscape and local architecture was a marker of the images' rural setting that was interpreted as unsophisticated and old-fashioned. Conversely, dwellers of Touba often appreciated the modest attires of Ka's sitters, whom they described as

[121] Soxna Noley Kumba Faye, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, May 2014; Abdourahmane Niang, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, May 2014.
[122] Abdourahmane Niang, Personal communication, Dakar, Senegal, May 2014.

dressing more appropriately than Casset's.[123] They appreciated the balance between sitter and backdrop, and the fact that they could see those familiar spaces.

Oumar Ka was a very successful photographer, producing a solid body of work with at least four hundred negatives. He was inventive in his compositions; he addressed his clients and embraced their environments, producing a variety of portraits and working creatively with what was available. Ka was a highly professional photographer too, one who was conscious of his role and his own image. In his archive I found dozens of self-portraits (fig. 4.26-7). In some cases, he poses in the studio with his *boubou*, in others with a European suit, or in the interiors of his home with his wife. In one particular example (fig. 4.28), Ka is holding his camera as he is looking down into the viewfinder to capture his reflection on the wardrobe's mirror. The image is carefully composed—he lowered his glasses, which are hanging under his chin, he has a pen in his pocket, and he wears his hat, which identifies him as a Mouride faithful. Once again, he does not only capture his own figure, but also articulates his personality through his surroundings. We can see the internal architecture of the thatch-roof house, the wardrobe, an armchair, and dozens of portraits hanging behind him. This is the portrait of a photographer who is self-conscious of his art and careful about his image. In various interviews, he explained that he used to give his own portraits away as gifts to his best customers.[124] I asked him again, surprised: "you took them to finish the film, right?" The answer was negative: it was a conscious marketing strategy to please and reward his clientele for their business.

[123] Touba, the headquarters of the Mourides, is considered a sacred space. While only in certain spaces around the mosque pilgrims have to take their shoes off and cover their head, across the city dwellers tend to dress more modestly compared to Dakar. Both Ka and Casset were devout Muslim, however, it is important to different interpretations of Muslim décor.

[124] Oumar Ka, Personal communication, Touba, Senegal, December 2012, January 2013 and April 2014.

Conclusion

In 1970, when the implementation of Negritude into concrete cultural policies was at its apogee, Léopold Sédar Senghor stated that "Africa teaches that art is not photography."[125] Within this view, the image should not copy or mimic reality, but rather function through analogy. As opposed to European art, African art should "not signify what it represents but what it suggests, what it creates."[126] In opposing the practice of art as photography, Senghor sought to liberate the African image—whether created with words or brushstrokes—from the mechanics of the camera and the burden of representation. I argue that Senghor was not necessarily against Realism or technological media per se; rather, he was seeking to move the spotlight from mimesis to experience. This shift encouraged the artist not to represent an external world, but to enter into meaningful contact with it and express the world's vital forces.

Precisely when Senghor was writing these articles, studio photography was becoming a social imperative. This chapter considered the work of two photographers, Mama Casset and Oumar Ka, who were based respectively in Dakar and Touba. Casset had been trained by the most popular photographers in Dakar and his work served the growing urban middle class, whose imaginings were also shaped by the popularization of mass media such as cinema and magazines. Conversely, Ka is better described as a self-trained photographer, who learnt the métier as he experimented with his camera. The first ten years of his career were mostly devoted to an itinerant practice that served the largely rural community of the Baol region. Formally, the two practitioners employ aesthetic choices that can be seen as almost antipodal. Casset favored close-ups, Ka long shots. Casset blurred the background to make his sitter stand out, while in Ka's works the absence of props was compensated by the sitters' rich environments. They both

[125] Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," 34.
[126] "The Spirit of Civilisation or the Laws of African Negro Culture," 59.

engendered movement in their compositions, but again while Casset produces it by modulating the surface of the image with light and shadow, Ka uses the textures of his backgrounds to articulate his images.

Despite these differences, both photographers became extremely popular among their respective clienteles. They successfully tailored their practices to their customers' demands. In both cases, these photographers' works have reached us almost intact. Casset's vintage prints have been collected by Dakarois families and international buyers; Ka has carefully stored the negatives that he produced over the length of his career. Casset and Ka both used photography to capture their sitters' persona. Yet their formal strategies, as well as their sitters' tastes, could not be more different. What a portrait looked like to each of them responded to different inflections or myths of modernity.

In one of his writings Senghor admitted that artists should not turn their back completely on reality. In his words:

> This does not mean that the Negro artist and writers of today must turn their backs on reality and refuse to interpret the social realities of their background, their race, their nation, their class, far from it. We have seen that the spirit of African Negro civilization became incarnate in the most day-to-day realities. But always it transcends these realities as to express the meaning of the world.[127]

In this passage, Senghor seeks to strike a balance in which he does not alienate those art forms that are embedded in quotidian rituals and routines. Many of the African objects in our museums were once used in those "day-to-day realities" that Senghor is referring to. Senghor's writing emerges from a need to negotiate what the future of art may be. His formula of "*enracinement et ouverture*" serves as a compass to navigate these uncharted spaces. Yet, it is the photographers more than Senghor who, with their practice, constantly negotiated with the effects of modernity.

[127] Ibid., 64.

In his article, Diawara established photography's transformative power in instantly rendering its sitters as modern subjects. The discussion of Casset's and Ka's works, however, remind us that this modernizing force was not photography, but the photographer's and client's creative act; one that could narrate more than one myth at a time.

Conclusion

Writing in the early 2000s, scholars such as Suzanne Blier, Allan Roberts, Frederick Lamp and Susan Vogel noticed that the field of African art was at the end of an era.[1] African art, and particularly sculptures in wood, had gradually but finally "won wide recognition as one of the great artistic achievements of humankind"; and yet, Africanist scholars were abandoning the study of these objects to consider other subjects such as contemporary art.[2] Scholars, collectors and students were slowly leaving behind research on "traditional African art" to gravitate towards new objects, topics and questions. In noticing this fissure, Vogel *inter alia* describes some "symptoms of exhaustion": fewer publications, less ambitious exhibitions, shorter fieldwork research, less willingness to study local languages etc.[3]

The field of African photography studies emerges precisely at that time. The first major scholarly contributions on photographic practices in the continent appeared in the late 1990s as the larger field of African art studies seemed polarized between "traditional" and "contemporary" art practices. These two fields' approaches, questions and collecting practices seemed irreconcilable. The anxiety regarding the possible "end" of the field of traditional African art studies is palpable in scholarly articles of the early 2000s. Yet, as has happened in other fields—think of the debate on the "death of photography" in the transition from analog to digital—I would argue that this crisis does not augur an imminent end, but rather a transformation of the

[1] Susan Mullin Vogel, "Whither African Art? Emerging Scholarship at the End of an Age," *African Arts* 38, no. 4 (2005); Suzanne Preston Blier, "Nine Contradictions in the New Golden Age of African Art," ibid.35, no. 3 (2002); Allen F. Roberts, "Is Africa Obsolete?," ibid.33, no. 1 (2000); Frederick Lamp, "Africa Centered," ibid.32 (1999).
[2] Susan Mullin Vogel, "Whither African Art? Emerging Scholarship at the End of an Age," ibid.38, no. 4 (2005): 12.
[3] Ibid., 13.

discourse, one that may help us better understand art practices in the continent at large.[4] Rather than focus on the dispute, I argue that photography is one of the few media that can allow us to bridge rather than widen the fracture in the discipline.

Photography arrived on the continent as early as the 1840s; however, it developed and flourished in the twentieth century, precisely when most of the traditional art that is now displayed in museums in Europe and the US was produced. If photographic portraits were produced at the same time as wooden masks, what does this indicate about categorizations such as "traditional" and "modern"? If Ọlọ́wẹ̀ of Isẹ̀ (born circa 1875, died circa 1938), one of the most important Yoruba and Nigerian artists of the twentieth century, produced his sculptures alongside photographers selling their *cartes-de-visite,* how should we discuss these *coeval* objects?[5]

Johannes Fabian has discussed extensively the notion of time in the creation of the "Other." By relegating the African subject to a distant space and time, disciplines such as anthropology engender a "denial of coevalness" and construct the "Other" as living in an allochronic, rather than synchronous time.[6] Although Fabian wrote this in 2002 his analysis is still relevant to our research today as we struggle with chronologies, and labels such as 'traditional' and 'modern.' This overlap of practices that initially appear separate forces us to re-consider once again our understanding of time and preconceived notions of modernity.

The study of photographic practices on the continent allows us to bypass preconceived understandings of Africa and its art. These histories I studied and traced suggest that Africans

[4] On the death of photography see: Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, 175. On the end of art history see:Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
[5] Roslyn A. Walker, Ọlọ́wẹ̀ of Isẹ̀, and National Museum of African Art, *ỌLỌ́Wẹ̀ of Isẹ̀: A Yoruba Sculptor to Kings* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1998).
[6] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 31.

embraced photography; they did not shy away from portraiture or mimesis; and they were not afraid of the new technology. These histories can therefore shift the way we approach traditional African art. In a similar manner, research on traditional art practices can inform and enrich our understanding of the significance of photography. Many of the questions that have shaped the historiography of African art remain central to an understanding of photographic practices: the role of the author, mimesis, physiognomy, performativity, etc.

The histories of photography in Africa demonstrate that what we term "traditional" and "modern" coexisted and shaped one another. In fact, we can understand more about the photographic experience only by studying how it functioned in daily life and in dialogue with other rooted practices. The study of the history of photography forces us to look at these apparently contradictory forces and behaviors. Antonio Gramsci stated that "the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears."[7] The history of photography allows us to study these symptoms with precision.

This dissertation discussed the proliferation of photographic portraiture in Senegal, focusing on four moments between the 1860s to the 1960s. Chapter One considered historical material such as *cartes-de-visite,* cabinet prints, and postcards commissioned by the first Senegalese sitters as early as the 1860s. By examining the commissions of these patrons, I challenge unilateral conceptions of photography as an apparatus of ideological control monopolized by the colonial authority. Conventional wisdom has claimed that Islam is responsible for promoting an essentially aniconic art. However, in Chapter Two, I argue that, in the case of Senegal, Islam was instead responsible for introducing and circulating devotional images in the form of glass paintings, chromolithographs and photographs starting in the 1890s,

[7] Gramsci quoted in Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression," 222.

thereby triggering a local demand for images and stimulating a desire for portraiture, in particular. Chapter Three focuses on two series produced in the interwar period by unidentified amateur photographers from Saint Louis, Senegal's historical capital. I argue that these snapshots, displayed in homes and archived in albums, delineate the birth of a new subjectivity and present Saint Louis as a third space that neither mimicked French culture, nor conformed to Wolof customs. The last chapter considers studio practices of the 1960s, when photography became a social imperative. By juxtaposing the work of Mama Casset—one of the most popular photographers working in the capital—with that of Oumar Ka—an itinerant photographer based in the interior—I revisit the association of photography's modernity with urban living and propose instead to relate it to "rural" tastes and styles.

By focusing on these different perspectives, I account for photography's changing significance in relation to different media and social practices. This study frames the nature of photography as a multiplier of visions that accommodates the Senegalese's identities and modernities. To engage with these practices means understanding the facets of the medium—which is global and promiscuous.

What next?

The study of photography in Africa and across the globe is expanding, with numerous dissertations and publications in the making. Until recently, African photographers received significant international attention compared to their non-Western colleagues; and in a very short time, the work of photographers such as Malick Sidibé, Seydou Keïta and Mama Casset was included in scholarly publications, international museum exhibits and private collections.

One may then wonder, firstly, as research is being conducted and new works are being retrieved, is there enough critical space for these new artists? Or is the art market satisfied with just a few photographers, who can sate its hunger for the exotic? Indeed, while almost all of the most prestigious international museums feature in their collection at least one Sidibé and Keïta, attesting to their inclusivity, it will be interesting to see how many will be interested in expanding their collections to accommodate other genres and aesthetics of African photography.

Secondly, as scholars travel across the continent bringing to international attention the work of new photographers, what are the best practices for conserving and archiving these corpuses? The dispute over the rights of Seydou Keïta's negatives, now in private hands, is one case that attests to the complexity of these transactions (or how terribly wrong these transactions can go).[8] Scholars and curators are testing alternative options to conserve original negatives and vintage prints, give visibility to photographers and respect the authors' rights to their images.[9] This medium, that generally includes a negative and a positive print, certainly introduces new problems of ownership (who owns the rights of reproduction? What is the value of a negative versus a positive?). It can also offer new solutions through the process of digitalization, whereby the work of art is no longer one and only, but can be (virtually) multiplied and located in different places and shared by different audiences. Although a good portion of the traditional African art objects entered international collections through unfair exchanges, perhaps this younger field has time to reflect before repeating these mistakes and propagating the myth of African art's allochronism.

[8] Marc Spiegler, "Negative Charges," *Art + Auction*, no. February (2005); Michael Rips, "Who Owns Seydou Keïta?," *The New York Times*, no. January 22 (2006).
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